

# GLOBUS MUNDI



DEPARTMENT OF  
POLITICAL SCIENCE &  
GLOBAL STUDIES  
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C O S U M N E S   R I V E R   C O L L E G E

FOR MAUREEN,  
WITH GRATITUDE FOR HELPING  
BRING THE WORLD TO OUR STUDENTS.

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## FACULTY PAGE

MARTIN MORALES



Welcome to Volume XIV of *Globus Mundi*, the official publication of the Department of Political Science & Global Studies

### PEACE OUT, MM

When I was hired in 2003, my first impressions of what this department had to offer weren't good. Political Science was mired in a traditional 1950's model, offering only three basic transfer level courses required for the CSU – the same model our administration is pushing us back to today. The US had just invaded Iraq after attacking Afghanistan and yet there was nothing being offered to students or the community from our discipline's perspective. Being new, I put my head down, taught as much as I could about the Middle East and our war in my classes while working toward tenure.

One day in my second year, while getting handouts together in the faculty work room, I was listening to a conversation a colleague was having about events in the Middle East and the upcoming US election. I don't remember the particulars of how I inserted myself into that conversation but am so happy I did. You see, this person and I, along with a few others, would come to build the amazing program I chair today. Maureen Moore introduced me to Rosalie Amer that fall and we started talking about the need to offer courses on the Middle East. Maureen, Rosalie and I spent many working lunches together starting in 2005, writing curriculum, matching courses to other discipline offerings and collaborating with colleagues to build interest and momentum necessary to support a new program. We attended so many meetings – student impressions groups, curriculum committee and meetings with our then VPI and college president. By Spring, 2007, we were able to offer our “almost approved” first course on the Middle East. Today, that course is styled “POLS 313: Politics in the Middle East,” Spring, 2007,

it was offered as an experimental offering (POLS 499). My biggest fear in offering that 499 section was that it would be low enrolled. Apparently, some people believed it would be, too, and stuck us in a small classroom on the first floor of the Library. Maureen, Rosalie and a few collaborators had gotten the word out and I was so happy to file a request for a new classroom to accommodate the 65 or so students who had crammed into that small, windowless classroom for our first night.

Starting in Fall, 2007 and for the next thirteen years, we managed to offer students and community members an opportunity to study the world. Maureen, Rosalie and colleagues offered courses in sync with ours and students came away with upper-division equivalent experiences and exposure to the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, the Pacific Rim, Central Asia and Southeast Asia. Maureen taught the related Humanities courses for each area and worked tirelessly to create events, host films and discussions to support the work being done in our classes.

Academic year 2009–2010, Maureen created a college-wide activity called “OneBook.” Basically, we all read the same book; assignments and discussions tied to the book were supported through her research, hard work and passion and we all enjoyed ourselves, learning as one. Our departmental contribution was to provide free advertising to OneBook in this journal. Indeed, if you look at our first volumes, you'll find Maureen's poster art as our back covers. This issue, *Globus Mundi's* fourteenth, has as its inside back cover what I call “the press release photograph” used to announce the launch of the Global Studies Program at CRC.

As Los Rios began to decline into its present corporate model, Maureen and I spoke about what would likely happen to our fields and what students would be denied unless something was done to preserve what we'd worked so hard to build. We agreed that keeping

the fight going was imperative but COVID and campus closure interrupted planning and, unfortunately for all of us, Maureen decided after a quarter century of service, to retire (2022).

Maureen's childhood was spent in Santa Rosa. She came to our alma mater, San Francisco State University, and graduated with an MA in Humanities and the Arts in 1990 as I was finishing up my BA in IR. Unfortunately, we never met while there.

My friend, Maureen, passed away October 7, 2023, at her home on Fox Island, Washington, after a brief battle with cancer. Throughout the time I knew Maureen, I admired her scholarship, wanderlust, drive and joi-de-vivre. I miss sitting in her office talking about the state of the world and I miss her laugh. Whether we were in her office or mine, passing in the halls on our way to/from lecture or coming from an event, Maureen would always end any exchange we had with "Peace Out." And she'd always sign her emails to me with MM causing me to sign off on my replies to hers as "mm."

You're missed, MM. Peace Out. mm

## MODE: REBUILDING

Fall, 2023 was the beginning of an interesting academic year for me, personally. I came into the year unsure about what to expect and got off to what I thought was a good start. Unfortunately, I suffered a retinal detachment at the end of September and spent October at home recovering. What momentum I was building was lost to the injury and I've been scrambling since then to regain it.

CRC continues to insist on offering more online courses than it should and, consequently, our enrollment suffers for it. Campus life is nowhere near what it was pre-Covid but it is returning. Students tell us they don't like having to take courses online, that they struggle and feel as if they're not truly learning; they also miss the human connection the classroom provides. We continue to adapt and hope we're able to rebuild our department to what it was at its height. The fact that our last cohort transferred almost en banc makes it more difficult but we fight on.

Our events series is a great way to recruit and it's slowly coming back. This year, we hosted our annual "New Student Orientation" on September 27, 2023, and were joined by Dr. Rick Schubert who presented on behalf of the Honors Program. "Israel & Hamas" followed on November 1st, in my Middle Eastern Politics class and addressed the (ongoing) situation in Gaza. Immediately following this event, an "Alumni Panel" spoke about the transition away from CRC to UC Davis and San Francisco State. **Madison Hinshaw**, **Gabriella Violett** and **Brenda Chavarin**, in addition to attending the event and presenting, also took questions from students late into the night. This semester, we hosted "City of Life & Death," a film about the 1937 Japanese invasion of China which was followed by discussions on conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza. This

film was screened on February 21, 2024, as an advertisement for next semester's Global Studies course on the Pacific Rim. President Biden's State of the Union Speech was viewed on March 7th and cohosted by the History Department. History Professor **Gabriel Gorman** joined **Beth Huffman** and I for impressions and Q&A following the speech. Colloquium, on May 1st, wrapped up the year for us. All events were well attended. The optimism we have for next year is rooted in student comments following our events: they're grateful for the event(s) and appreciate being able to interact with students they normally never get to see. Next year's series will include our annual orientation, election related events, film screenings, field trips in support of our Global Studies courses on the Pacific Rim and Africa and, of course, Colloquium.

Perhaps the biggest surprise I got this year, one I'm very grateful for, came from fall's 1:30 PM section of US Government. I shared with this class, which is usually the class we recruit most of our students from, that we're rebuilding but needed help. They stepped up and it's reflected in this volume. **Grey Juanola**, our covers artist, also contributed "the Decision to Pull American Troops out of Afghanistan." **Madeleine Mu** examines the costs associated with American involvement in the Syrian civil war in "The Syrian Civil War and US Tax Dollars." **Noel Prudente** discusses US military and trade policy in "The US and its Position in the Philippine Islands." Censorship, on its own, is disturbing but when coupled with homophobia, bigotry or xenophobia becomes extremely dangerous. **Izzy Dabaco** addresses the fears of some in "The Fear of Controversial Content: The Hidden Killer of Books and Classes." Many thanks to these students from my 1:30 PM section. I can only hope you four change your majors!

Alumni are also key to helping us rebuild and we're grateful for all they do. This year, **Gabriella Violett** contributes "Necropolitics and the Power of Bones in Post-Genocide Rwanda" for inclusion in this volume of *Globus Mundi*.

Our three Colloquium presenters, **Gabriela McMorris**, **Ricardo Miles** and **Alexis Trillas** contributed amazing articles on political violence, sports in IR and children in IR, respectively. Gabriela's article, "Violence and the Psyche: A Study of Psycho-politics Resulting from Political Violence," focuses on policy decisions associated with post conflict politics. Ricardo's looks at the uses of futbol and other sports by some countries to wash their images in the world press; it's an innovative and revealing study of foreign policy. "Children in IR" is upper division course content, presciently brought to us courtesy of Alexis' article focusing on the effects of conflict on children. Colloquium was held on May 1st and was very well attended by students, faculty, family and friends.

Saudi Arabia and Iran have had difficult relations since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. **Michael Cutter's** article, "Saudi-Iranian

# FACULTY PAGE

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Détente: Background & Impact” looks at the ongoing changes and challenges facing both nations as they seek to ease tensions and collaborate.

While leading the world in production of solar panels and supporting efforts to slow climate change, it needs to be said what the People’s Republic of China is really doing in the realm of environmental policy, something **Brandon Santos** does in his article “China: Climate Concerns and Foreign Policy.”

The articles for this issue of *Globus Mundi* were edited by **Katelynn Lyall** and **Gabriela McMorris**. Katelynn returns next year for her last year at CRC and will continue as both TA and departmental tutor in addition to interning in Governor Newsom’s office. Gabriela, an Honors student, leaves us this year and we wish her well.

## ALUMNI NEWS

**Isabel (Maria) Zaragosa**, co-editor of Volume XIII and author of “Ethiopia: At War with Itself,” (Vol. XII) received late notification of her acceptance at UCLA last year. We honor her achievement and can’t wait to hear how she’s doing.

**Nadia Subhi** was admitted to and is attending USC. This news arrived after we went to print last year. Congratulations!

**Ammar Ansari** graduates from Oxford University with his Master’s degree after what was surely a very busy year. Ammar transferred to and graduated from UC Berkeley (BA in Political Science and BA in History with Honors); he also attended the London School of Economics. Ammar will be working in Bangladesh as part of his legal fellowship focused on international law and climate displacement.

**Madison Hinshaw** is enjoying her new department and classes at SF State while she continues to build on her article “Musical Instruments of Wartime,” published in our last volume.

**Gabriella Violet**, my former TA, contributed “Necropolitics and the Power of Bones in Post-Genocide Rwanda” as this edition’s alumni article. Gabriella will attend the London School of Economics this fall. Brenda Chavarin, attending UC Davis and a presenter at last year’s colloquium, will spend her summer in Thailand as part of her study abroad requirement.

**Jimmy Guzman** graduates from University of the Pacific this month and will attend Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey for a Master’s in Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies/International Trade (Middlebury used to be Monterey/DLI.)

**Samantha Bland**, another former TA of mine (and Portugal travel partner) graduates from Hull University. Samantha plans to remain in the UK and pursue a Master’s Degree.

**Karanbir Singh** has just completed his first year of law school at George Washington University in Washington, DC. Karanbir

transferred to and graduated from UC San Diego.

**Paloma Ramos** graduates from University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) with an MPP. She and her husband, Nick, will be moving to Washington, DC this summer. Paloma transferred to and graduated from UC Davis.

**Jaime Velasco** has been accepted into the MPA program at USC. Jaime transferred to and graduated from UC Davis. He presently works as Legislative Aide to California Senator Steve Glazer.

**Hawa Amiri** starts at NYU this fall for an MA in Global Affairs. Hawa transferred to and graduated from UC Davis.

**Kaleemah Muttaqi** has applied for Fullbright’s in association with work for the SOAS at the University College, London

**Namveer Singh** is working on his Ph.D. in Spain (Fullbright Scholarship recipient). He transferred to and graduated from UC Davis.

If you’re alumni, please check in and tell us how you’re doing. We’d love to hear from you.

## CONCLUSION

Inquiries regarding *Globus Mundi* should be directed to Professor Martin Morales, Department Chair, at (916) 691-7114 or, via email, to [moralem@crc.losrios.edu](mailto:moralem@crc.losrios.edu)

Thank you for your support.

# VALETE

THIS SECTION OF ALUMNI NEWS IS DEDICATED TO IDENTIFYING THOSE WHO ARE TRANSFERRING

ADAM ABUMUGHASEEB UCSD

DYLAN BEDNARZ UoP

AUTUMN HIGGINS UC DAVIS

STEPHANIE HUERTA UCLA

TYLER JACOBI UCSD

BRANTLEY LY UC DAVIS

GABRIELA McMORRIS UCLA

RICARDO MILES SFSU

NARGIS MOHIB UC DAVIS

SABEEKA RIZVI UC DAVIS

ARRON TABINGO UC DAVIS

# ALUMNI CORNER: NECROPOLITICS AND THE POWER OF BONES IN POST-GENOCIDE RWANDA

GABRIELLA VIOLETT

## INTRODUCTION

Following a years-long campaign of dehumanization, somewhere between a half million and a million Rwandans (primarily Tutsis, but also moderate Hutus and Twa) were killed in the span of just 100 days during the 1994 genocide through the combined efforts of the Hutu Power state and various Interahamwe militia groups. The given excuses for the genocide ranged from the supposed role of the Tutsi in the April 6th assassination of President Juvénal Habyarimana to the support of Rwandese Tutsis for the invading Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) whose growing conflict with the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR), but in truth, smaller instances of mass violence against the Tutsi had been occurring for decades. The 1994 genocide was the culmination of years of intense, targeted hatred and discrimination that created a false binary between those who were truly Hutu and all others. Key to the level of intense individual violence inflicted on the victims of the Rwandan genocide and the massive scope of the genocide was a process of complete and total deindividualization by the genocidaires which reduced their victims to a subhuman state. As a result, the dead were treated without respect, dignity, or any shred of humanity. The remains of the victims were variously thrown in the river, buried in shallow graves- individually or more commonly, en masse-, disposed of in latrines, or left where they were killed, be that out in the open, by the side of a road, inside their homes, or at a massacre site, left with countless other dead.

In the immediate post-genocidal period, the general instability

of the nation meant that the post-genocide government was, necessarily, more concerned with rebuilding the state, so it fell to survivors to deal with sheer number of the dead and means by which they had been disposed. Survivors wanted to give their loved ones and, in truth, all victims the dignity that their treatment and deaths had denied them. So when the state went about disinterring the remains and allocating land for mass graves, it was the survivors who began to build memorials. From the first informal local memorials to the large internationally supported memorials, survivors have played a key role in creating, maintaining, and shaping memorial sites. Since then, other actors have become involved, namely the Rwandan state through the National Commission for the Fight against Genocide (CNLG), but international organizations have also had a hand in their construction and maintenance. That being said, it has still, consistently fallen to the survivors to exhume mass graves and work with the remains. It has been survivors who have taken the remains of their fellow Rwandese and done their best to treat them with dignity and respect before they are either re-interred in communal graves or taken to the closest memorial sites. Upon reaching memorial sites, the remains are stored and sometimes displayed. These sites and the treatment of remains surrounding them have been met throughout the years with intense scrutiny and concern.

As the 30th anniversary of the genocide looms, much has changed. In the intervening years, the Rwandan state has become more involved in the oversight of memorial sites and in



memorialising the genocide more broadly as the survivors who created the memorials have become older. With the passage of time, many of those initial stewards have been gradually replaced by formally trained “professional survivors” and second generation English-speaking retournées, educated in genocide studies. These groups, employed by the state, have become the official mouthpiece for these memorial sites and in doing so have taken on the incredible responsibility and burden which comes with being the bearer of memory. The role of memorials and any such site of remembrance in society is not universally agreed upon except in its broadest understanding. In Rwanda specifically, memorials have become a battleground for memory and who can determine it. While the Rwandan state has never been the first voice when it comes to memorialization, with the power conferred to a state, its voice does have considerable sway. In the most charitable view, the increasing involvement of the Rwandan state and official bodies are an attempt to address the criticisms of survivors for their previously negligent role in “memory policy” and supporting survivors in tangible and meaningful ways. Less charitably, it can be seen as the Rwandan government attempting to use the memorials, which serve as places of remembrance and grieving for survivors, as a way to cultivate the official state memory of the genocide. This serves the internal function of creating a unified state, shaped by national laws which govern speech concerning the genocide. It also functions internationally by projecting the appearance of a nation that is now thriving despite the colonial violence it was subjected to and the imposed racial hierarchy that inspired the ideology behind the 1994 genocide.

It bears repeating that the memorial sites in Rwanda were created first and foremost by survivors in the immediate aftermath of the genocide. While the RPF-led government was busy attempting to rebuild Rwanda by stabilizing the region and establishing a state presence, the survivors were performing a parallel task in attempting to rebuild Rwanda through its people. Motivated by grief for which there was no precedent and a deeply felt sense of duty and obligation to the victims, survivors came together and created memory sites. Since then, the Rwandese have emphasized the central importance of *agaciro* (a word encapsulating dignity, self-worth, and self-respect) to their new national identity. Naturally, this extends to how Rwandese approach the remains of genocide victims and many of the debates surrounding their treatment revolve around *agaciro*. For many, re-establishing the dignity that was denied to genocide victims in their deaths and through the treatment of their remains by genocidaires is at odds with the state’s handling of memory through the creation of a single state accepted narrative which is mirrored in the presentation of remains as a singular *masse*, anonymous and indistinguishable. This paper seeks to examine the role of human remains in memorials

within the context of returning dignity and respect to the victims of genocide by understanding the relationship between the destruction of remains by genocidaires, the search for and identification of remains by survivors, and the return of the remains to society. The role of remains in genocide will be examined through the theory of necropolitics, or the power of a state to exert sovereignty over life through its control of death. Following this, the role of remains in a post-genocide setting will be explored through the power of bones to allow survivors and their descendents to come to terms with the event. Finally, the importance of survivor narratives in all their multiplicity and the necessity of fostering respectful discussions and debates through genocide memorials will be established.

## NECROPOLITICS

In his book, *Necropolitics*, Achille Mbembe expands on the Foucauldian theory of biopolitics in which the sovereign exerts its power through life and the living bodies of its subjects. Necropolitics, as defined by Mbembe is then, as one might imagine, the power which a sovereign exerts over the living through its control over death. Most narrowly, this is the ability of the sovereign to deal out death which results in its unique capacity to inspire terror by confronting a person with the dissolution of their humanity when their life and death ceases to belong to them. More broadly, necropolitics includes the power which is exerted not just through dealing out death, but in how the dead and their remains are treated. During the Rwandan genocide when death was everpresent, the unburied skeletons presented a stark contrast between “the petrification of the bones and their strange coolness and (...) their stubborn will to mean, to signify something.” Murders were carried out in broad daylight deliberately; people were tortured and dismembered publically, the dead were left where they fell or thrown aside in some semi-public space with the knowledge that it was not safe to attempt to provide dignified burials. The remains served as permanent physical reminders to all those who witnessed them that the victims were not human and neither were any who could be connected to them.

There is a deep political significance to violence that extends beyond murder and becomes mutilation. The absolutist genocidal mindset in which the selected victim is inhuman is fundamentally at odds with the reality that confronts a genocidaire whenever they look at their all too human victims. In response, and as a means to both justify and cope with the violence that they perpetrate, genocidaires will mutilate their victims while still living and continue after their death. By degrading and deforming their victims, they attempt to deprive them of their physical humanity. This serves to physically other the victims, separating them from the genocidaires, confirming in the minds of the perpetrators that

those they have killed were not like them, they were not people. The Hutu Power movement was intent on denying the humanity of the Tutsi population of Rwanda, there is no argument to be made against that. Any who opposed this view, be they Hutu themselves or Twa, were relegated to the same position and likewise denied their humanity. This was not only done through official politics and publications, but through word of mouth, transferred from one person to the next until it was readily accepted by a large enough percentage of the remaining population that a community of perpetrators was created and genocide became feasible.

As Thomas Gregory notes, when violence enacted on victims goes far beyond the desire to kill, it is fueled by a desire and a need to leave them utterly unrecognizable as human “because it effectively deprives the victims of their status as human beings, reducing them instead to a collection of unidentifiable body parts”. Genocidal violence specifically goes a step further because in the mind of the genocidaire there exists an elaborately constructed and fantastically inhuman caricature of his victim. A cognitive dissonance is produced in the mind of a genocidaire when he is confronted with the humanity of the person, vulnerable and so undeniably human, whose life he is determined to end. This dissonance creates such a profound need to deny the humanity of the victim and physically other them that antemortem degradation and post mortem mutilation becomes commonplace. A person is no longer a person, they are disassembled. Parts of their bodies are removed and destroyed; they become a collection of parts devoid of meaning and connection. This is done because the act of killing by itself is not enough to deny a person their humanity. A person must be stripped of anything identifiably human; their individuality and their identity must be destroyed and everything that they once were and might have been has been entirely denied. In doing this the genocidaire is secure in the correctness of their actions in their own mind. The destruction of the human body to this degree and with this frequency is the result of a new and undeniable truth that the genocidaire and their society accepts without question. The act of performing such mutilation, in addition to being a manifestation of this belief, works to reinforce it as well. It inspires further cruelty and further desecration because it further entrenches such beliefs to see a human body reduced to this condition.

This degradation and mutilation also serves another purpose. It provides a means by which the genocidaire can terrorize the friends, the loved ones, and all others connected to their victim, torturing them by defiling the corpse and rendering it unrecognizable. In her book, *Horrorism*, Adriana Cavarero discusses the intended indignity on the part of such perpetrators when they dismember a body and the pain it is meant to inflict on all those who see the remains, or rather, cannot bear to see

them. The unrecognizable and unclaimable bodies are by this destruction denied the opportunity to be mourned as they might have been, they are denied traditional burial rights through their complete and utter destruction. By attacking one member of the group, the genocidaire is able to chip away at the humanity of every other member of the group. The means of inflicting death during a genocide is often very telling, providing an understanding into the genocidal ideology that lies at the core of the movement.

The disposal of the remains, when they were disposed and not simply left in the open, was in mass graves; bodies lumped together as a mass, left to rot together. During the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), the trial of Tharcisse Renzaho, prefect of Kigali-Ville, witnesses appeared before the tribunal and testified that he “instructed truck and bulldozer drivers to dig holes and to collect bodies.” There was no consensus there at the trial whether or not his actions were an attempt to conceal the bodies or to act in the interest of public health and safety, but in no instance was the consideration made on the recognition of the humanity of the victims and the need for them to be buried. They were gotten rid of, that was all. With death, comes decay and with decay, comes the need for disposal. That necessary disposal presents an opportunity to determine “how to reconcile the quest for a dignified end of human life, with a putrefying piece of flesh indistinguishable from other animals.” In each of the hundreds of thousands of instances in which people were brutally murdered during the Rwandan genocide, their killers took the opportunity and refused the imperative to recognise the humanity of their victims.

### SURVIVORS

This refusal to recognize victims as human during the height of the genocide was not exclusive to the genocidaire. Ayala Maurer-Prager, in writing about victim testimony and literature that was inspired by the genocide, discusses the dehumanization of victims as a survival mechanism. During the desperate bid for survival and escape, she notes, survivors who acknowledged the humanity of those remains they were confronted with would be so overcome with grief and horror, finding the will to live and fight became difficult. Recognizing a loved one, a neighbor, or even simply recognizing the humanity of a body could result in a person reacting in such a way that undermines their survival: a cry, a scream, or just indulging the fear and allowing it to take hold. It was only in the relative safety of the aftermath that survivors felt free to recognize the humanity of the corpses around them, albeit in an un-individualized way.

This inability during the genocide to recognize the humanity of victims and their remains is perhaps one reason why necessity of restoring dignity to the remains of those lost has been argued



so adamantly. Because of the treatment that victims and their bodies had endured at the hands of genocidaires, a new expression *Gushyingura mu cyubahiro*, meaning burial with dignity, appeared and with it came an expectation that everything possible would be done to restore the dignity of the dead. This dignity, however, came without identification or individual recognition, something made impossible by the reality of the genocide. For so many, by the conclusion of the genocide, due to the amount of time which had passed and the treatment of remains during the 100 days, individual identification was unlikely and in many cases impossible. There was not the time or the resources available for the Rwandese to identify each and every body, nor was there guaranteed to be any person still living who could identify them, entire families had been killed, leaving no one behind. Instead, groups of survivors went out and began the process of ‘untangling the remains’. After an area was excavated, all of the remains at a given site would be given the same treatment:

“Soil is washed away from exhumed substances, and the human remains are unravelled, with personal possessions, clothes, identity cards, bones, flesh and other soft tissues separated one from another. If a skeletal structure is recovered

intact, it is disarticulated. Separate piles of collected bones and amassed soft flesh are created. These exhumations therefore have a very particular outcome, regardless of their status when unearthed. Human remains that could bear the traces of individual identity are almost always rendered anonymous.”

Whatever might have marked the remains as unique or individual is stripped from them and once that has been done, all of the remains from a given site are collected and from there they are delivered to memorial sites. This particular method of processing, so utterly different from all other means of processing and handling anonymous remains discovered at massacre sites is one of the most contentious aspects of Rwanda’s handling of the remains of their genocide victims. This treatment brings with it a finality. There is no identification, reassembly, or reunification with loved ones that could ever be possible after this. There is no possible means of differentiating the individual remains from the collective that can ever take place again. From this point on, individuals are no more, instead they are all part of a mass, anonymous collective. There is instead, as Sarah Guyer puts it, a ‘nonanthropomorphizing’ that is a distinct part of Rwandan

commemoration. While many outside of Rwanda find this strange and distressing, and there are certainly Rwandese who share that opinion, this method of treating remains was developed as an immediate response by small groups of survivors, deep in grief, to an overwhelming number of remains. The disproportionate number of dead compared to those left to mourn them combined with the state of many of the remains meant that the typical forms of private bereavement were impossible, so communities began to mourn all of the dead together.

For some, the remains of victims provided the tangible, indisputable evidence that genocide occurred, serving as a bulwark against genocide denial. To them, their existence as evidence demanded they be displayed as incontrovertible proof; they were the physical representation of an otherwise unimaginable horror. Looking to the future, they became the way to educate future generations about the danger of allowing ethnic division to foment into genocidal ideology and rhetoric, a way to fulfill the promise “never again”. For others, the remains provided a connection to their loved ones who they have lost and have no other means of recovering. The sheer scope of the death and destruction of the 1994 genocide meant that most of the remains could not and would not ever be individually identified. Mourning in the wake of the Rwandan genocide became a communal affair; there were too many dead and too few to mourn them as they might have in years past. Instead, survivors came together to mourn everyone, those they knew and those they did not because all had suffered and all deserved to be mourned. The remains presented an opportunity to undo the violence and restore dignity to those whose manner of death had robbed them of it.

As they were grieving, groups of survivors began to construct memorial sites and while most of the dead were interred in community graveyards, some remains were set aside and put up on display at the sites. At the Nyamata Genocide Memorial, the church which was a massacre site now serves as a memorial to it, with the remains of the approximately 5,000 who were killed in the massacre in the church and the vault beneath it with over 45,000 people buried in mass graves outside on church grounds. This is not the case for all memorial sites where human remains are displayed. At Ntarama, the former church (another massacre site) has been left relatively untouched, with bones and other remains left in utter disarray, and at Murambi entire, fleshed bodies were covered in lime, posed as they were in death and those remains have been displayed as such. These latter two sites have received much harsher critiques because while their treatment of the remains or, in Ntarama’s case, lack thereof was intended to allow the evidence of what happened to be presented as accurately as possible, this very same treatment has led to a deterioration of

the remains as a result. If the remains of victims continue to decay and deteriorate as a result of their display, then they fail both in presenting permanent inarguable evidence against genocide denial and they represent a failure to treat the remains in a manner which restores to them their lost dignity.

### BONES

A form of necropolitics differing in spirit from the definition presented by Mbembe is the power that remains themselves hold over people, not as a conduit for state power, but an object and subject manifesting their own power through their connection to survivors. The perceived obligation by survivors to treat the remains with dignity is itself a manifestation of this. The haunted feeling that some Rwandese feel when thinking of remains left undiscovered is evidence of this. This intrinsic pull of the bones of victims on survivors is described in *Remnants: Embodied Archives of the Armenian Genocide* by Dr Elyse Semerdijan in personal reflection and through the narratives of other descendants of survivors in their experiences with the bones in the desert of Dayr al-Zur. As the final destination of the forced death march of the Armenian people, the sands in the area contain countless bones and it has become a pilgrimage for some among the Armenian diaspora as a way to connect with the uncounted dead. As Semerdijan notes, bones have the power to move those who interact with them and “(w)ithin this affective necrogeography, dis-memberment is remembered through memory practices and ritual that give the dead the power to witness through the living bodies of pilgrims.” Shortly after the Armenian genocide, survivors of the community went to the desert to attempt to recover the remains as they had once tried to recover the women and children who had been stolen and sold along the march. The remains of the dead were viewed in much the same way that the living had been- unquestionably belonging to the community and deserving of being reunited. Some expeditions took place and the recovered remains were placed in ossuaries in churches and memorials which were built in the area. This tradition has continued and even now, some pilgrims who visit the desert will gather the bones of the long dead, but not entirely forgotten. The purpose of collecting bones varies from person to person. Sometimes they represent history, a traumatic event which is denied to this day by the Turkish state, becoming a sort of physical representation of the truth which they can possess and cannot be denied. Semerdijan herself said as she held them, “I held the truth of 1915 in my hands.” To others they may represent something like relics, almost sanctified; Peter Balakian said “Our ancestors are here” as he filled his own pockets with fragments of bones on his way to a chapel. Perhaps it is the passage of time, the diasporic nature of the Armenian pilgrims and the personal and intimate

grieving that is done in the desert, or the fact that Dayr al-Zur was an unknown and unfamiliar place for the many Armenians who died there that distinguishes the two situations. Perhaps it is instead the prevalence of denial of the Armenian genocide even now compared to the fact that the Rwandan genocide was ended the Rwandese themselves by a state which has built itself around the history of the genocide.

In Rwanda, where the use of human remains to memorialize genocide is prevalent, the greatest criticism that many scholars have, in addition to the display of human remains seemingly being at odds with the stated purpose of returning dignity to the dead is the difficulty that bones, removed from narrative, have in adequately expressing the truth of genocide. As Guyer points out, bones by themselves are incapable of narrating genocide. Disarticulated, collected, and displayed, piles of bones hold little capacity to express what has happened to them. It is not the bones which give meaning to the memorials, it is the people who built them and the stories of victims and survivors. While it is possible that when contextualized through narrative, the remains of genocide victims may hold meaning, deteriorating collections of 30 year old bones on their own do not combat denial. In prioritizing collecting a preponderance of bones to display, one gains very little. What they more accurately represent, as the collected individual remains of victims reduced to a singular collective mass, is the multitude of individual memories and narratives of the genocide which have been subsumed into a single national narrative which the nation of Rwanda has built itself upon. There are no names and no identities given to the remains, that is alright perhaps, no names can ever again be given. What remains, although they decrease with every passing day, 30 years after the genocide took place, is a plurality of narratives and experiences which are not spoken of out of fear of contradicting the 'true' history of the genocide.

## HISTORY

Within the context of post-genocide Rwanda, Nigel Eltringham when discussing the debate over history, argues that there is inherent multiplicity in history which should be explored and understood. Genocide is necessarily built on an absolutist view, a singular truth about an entire people which is exploited as a means to take genocidal action. In Rwanda, in the years preceding the genocide, history had been weaponized against the Tutsi people. A historical narrative was widely circulated, presenting the Tutsi as inherently foreign and alien, oppressive outsiders who had abused the Hutu majority for years through a regime that the RPF was attempting to reestablish. One of the leading figures within the Hutu Power movement and the RTLM Director of Programmes was Ferdinand Nahimana, a historian. Importance of history and the danger of crafting a single narrative cannot be understated. A

denial of non-Hutu extremist narratives was a core component of the genocide and to continue down an absolutist path is to follow in the genocidaires footprints. Rejecting absolutism, which forms the basis of genocidal narratives, does not mean that one does not absolutely refute or condemn genocidal ideology and denialism, rather it means that multiple narratives can exist within the same chronicle of events without undermining the integrity or truth of others. Eltringham asserts that it is possible to have a non-negotiable chronicle of events that contains multiple narratives within. There is no need for a singular national narrative and there is significant danger in attempting to craft one. It will always preclude the experiences of some genocide victims and survivors. To force them to suppress their memories and their lived experiences after everything they have been through is a cruel manifestation of genocide denial. "Remains themselves cry out, as Mbembe says, with a "stubborn will to mean, to signify something", but the way in which the remains are presented defy any attempt to understand them without the testimony of survivors who are being increasingly pushed aside and whose stories are being overwritten by a singular state-approved narrative. It is "only testimony, usually by those who keep these memorials and guide visitors through them, turns the bones from transhistorical icons of death into the markers of a historical event" and yet these survivors are quieted if their testimony runs contrary to the exclusive state narrative.

The Rwandan state has permanently bonded itself to the genocide. It legitimizes its authority through its role in ending the genocide. It asserts its people's dignity through their treatment of the remains of the victims of the genocide. It interacts with the international community through the narrative of the genocide and the nation's miraculous recovery after the genocide. It has eliminated the public acknowledgement of ethnicity in response to the genocide. The Rwandan state has made the genocide so central to its existence that it cannot exist without it. It has turned the genocide, which it should be trying to heal from into an open wound that cannot close. The genocide is so deeply entrenched in the national narrative that it is impossible to move on from. The remains of the dead cannot be buried because their display and existence has become so central to the state's identity. In its criminalization of genocide denial, a legal quagmire so vague that it could be applied to nearly anything and has become a tool of political repression, again national politics and public speech are tied incontrovertibly to the genocide. By combatting genocide denial in the way that it has, the Rwandan state has set itself upon a path in which it is constantly denying the reality of the genocide that so many of its citizens lived through.

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# VIOLENCE AND THE PSYCHE: A STUDY OF PSYCHO-POLITICS RESULTING FROM POLITICAL VIOLENCE

GABRIELA MCMORRIS

In a one-hundred-day stretch from April to July 1994, over 800,000 citizens of Rwanda were martyred by extremist Hutu groups in a mass murder campaign against the minority Tutsi population. Nearly thirty years later, Palestinians in Gaza seem to face a similar threat as death tolls from the Israeli-Palestinian war have reached 27,000 since October 2023. Massive acts of political violence are not lost on the world; however, their detrimental effects on those who bear witness receive little consideration. The psychological determinants of those who experience acts of political violence have massive sociological and political implications that transcend generations. The idea of intergenerational transmission of trauma, specifically trauma of a political nature including that of massive strikes of violence, colonialism, and structural discrimination, is an emerging field of study but lacks an important connection to political ramifications in an increasingly globalized world. The psychosocial effects of witnesses and victims of political violence, as examined in the case study of Rwanda post-1994, have ineradicable influences on domestic and world politics across generations.

Under Belgium's colonial rule, formally peaceful classes of Hutu and Tutsi peoples became legally distinguished and tension emerged throughout the region. The groups had previously held distinctions in social roles and even political eminence as Tutsi kings were usually granted rule under colonial governments. However, the implementation of identity cards by the Belgians extirpated class movement and emphasized racial distinctions between the

groups. By 1959, the Hutu political movement for a majority-rule government began to build momentum which threatened the established Tutsi authority. The first act of violence occurred in 1959, marking the start of the Hutu Peasant Revolution and forcing thousands of Tutsi to become displaced and hundreds to be martyred. As the Tutsi authority weakened and ethnic tensions rose, Rwanda was simultaneously gaining its independence; nonetheless, the Tutsi people remained refugees from Hutu violence. Tutsi people began to attack the newfound Hutu government— ten attacks in the five years between 1962 and 1967—which only resulted in counterattacks, cyclical violence, and seas of refugees to neighboring nations, most prominently Uganda. Hostility persisted in the nation through the continuing decades, and by 1988, the 480,000 Tutsi refugees sought an “international legal right to return” to Rwanda but were denied by President Juvenal Habyarimana.

At this time, civil war broke out between the two classes. Refugees in Uganda, the majority of the Tutsi class, were shaped by their participation in the Ugandan revolution of President Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army and began their efforts as the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). The results of this major coalition were not the reinstatement of the Tutsi government but mass propaganda campaigns that led to intensified discrimination of Tutsi social and political ‘traitors’. Despite efforts from the United Nations to cease conflict, the death of the Rwandan president in April 1994 sparked a series of massacres, undoubtedly acts of genocide and terror. Nearly one million civilians, significantly of

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the Tutsi population, were martyred throughout the one-hundred-day conflict— in addition to the nearly 250,000 women raped and two million forcefully displaced thereafter. The RPF successfully seized the Hutu territories by July 4, 1994, formally ending the conflict and forcing the Hutus against the revolutionary force to flee to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Both international and domestic trials of genocidal crimes were held soon after. Unfortunately, the violence did not end in Rwanda and the Hutus seeking refuge in the DRC were vengefully targeted by RPF soldiers. Rebel groups backed by Rwanda militias seized the Congolese government and installed a new president. The war resulted in the involvement of six neighboring nations, spanned more than six years, and ended in the additional deaths of approximately five million people.

The current political climate of Rwanda strays vastly from its pre-genocide history. When the RPF was reinstated into the Rwandan government, the creation of their Constitution centered on a hope for “unity and reconciliation”. In many ways, the Rwandan government has created a fairly progressive government. The demographic of the population in Rwanda drastically changed after the genocide which left many high-government positions open for the seventy percent women population. In this way, the national government created policies centered on women’s health and a platform against sexual violence. From a psychosocial model, this demographic change is extremely significant to the cultural changes within the nation and imperative to note when discussing the psychosocial repercussions of the genocide. It is also imperative to note the political shift toward a highly controlled state in which political dissent is perceived as a direct threat to the government and the Tutsi class themselves. Arbitrary detention routinely serves as ideological control over the population and violence is not infrequent. Justice remains an important policy of the RPF and guides international relations between Rwanda as suspects of the 1994 genocide who have since fled are sought to return for trial in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. The Rwandan government has put international pressure on many nations and has been documented by the African Human Rights Watch of Rwandan refugees and those seeking asylum being forcibly deported or killed. These trials have extended past the individual and have even called to commission France’s role in enabling the genocide. It may seem counterintuitive that a government formed based on anti-political violence would stray so far from the democratic government they established; however, with each of the political perspectives— the ideology of distrust and the perception of threat— that guide Rwanda’s domestic and international behaviors, psychological interpretations of the post-genocidal state can rationalize the corruption seen in the nation and many other nations with similar pasts.



To experience massive acts of violence undoubtedly warrants the inducement of stress reactions indicative of illnesses such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It was reported that in a sample of 2074 Rwandans exposed to the events of 1994— with a variety of experiences ranging from the forceful flee from their homes, the death of a close family member, or the destruction of their property— 24.8% met the study’s criteria for PTSD. PTSD is not the only psychological response to trauma. Research shows that acts of violence “out of people’s control [and] occurring to large groups of people that share a social space” have a greater threat of psychological harm due to the “loss of interpersonal, intrapersonal, and economic and material resources [and are] key predictors of psychological distress.” This is the basis of the Conservation of Resources theory that suggests that the loss of resources, or threat thereof, is the key indicator of psychological damage. These resources are not limited to material resources like housing and food, but also psychosocial ones such as social systems of support, emotional efficacy, and perceived self-control. According to Maslow’s psychological theory of the hierarchy of needs, it is impossible to obtain self-actualization without all other tiers of needs being met: physiological, safety, belonging, or esteem. Massive acts of political violence displace entire communities from their homes, leave children without parental and familial systems, and take away the autonomy of decision-making for the basic needs of survival. Those with exposure to this trauma have altered psychological processing because they lack the resources necessary for actualized self-thought. While a diagnosis of PTSD is significant in the understanding of psychological deficits from the trauma of political violence, it is not the only indication of stress responses.

The type of violence is also significant to the response of individuals. Direct and interpersonal violence have vastly different effects on psychological detriments than indirect violence. In modern and postmodern characteristics of war, violence has become very impersonal. Bombs, ecological and environmental terrorism,



chemical warfare, and even guns put distance between the victim and the offender of violence. However, in cases like Rwanda, the violence was direct and personal. Violence was committed from neighbor unto neighbor, face-to-face. Sexual violence was also committed on a massive scale. This direct violence creates very different psychological cognitions than that of impersonal violence. Indirect violence allows for a perception of luck within survivors. However, when violence, like that of Rwanda, is brutal and personal, the psychological deficits increase substantially. Rwandan survivors of the genocide reported experiencing twelve separate traumatic events on average and tested higher on psychological measurements of depression and anxiety than that on average of political prisoners. The implication of interpersonal violence is a general sense of dehumanization both within oneself and towards others. Ingroup brutality increases the inclination of distrust and drastically lowers survivors' psychological perception of safety. It causes victims to feel as though they are less than human to receive such violence, and that their neighbors are less than human to commit such violence. The effects of this dehumanization in regard to societal progression post-trauma are immense. The presence of dehumanization within politics aids the cycle of violence and also the decline of democracy within a state. It encourages individuals to support government-imposed violence and marginalization of outgroups. The perception of dehumanized thought from an outgroup causes the populace to in turn dehumanize the original group and thus perpetuates even more of the harmful cognition.

The response of trauma where psychosocial and physiological resources are threatened disrupts typical psychological processes of trust. On an individual level, there is a sense of vulnerability that stems from traumatic experiences and causes a general mistrust of other individuals, institutions, classes of people, or governments. This theory can be applied to the individual as well as larger groups of people with shared historical or cultural experiences. Tutsi people witnessed a government that supported and allowed the genocide of nearly a million people, displaced them from their homes, executed their loved ones, and took away resources, communities, and safety all on the premise of race. Mistrust of future administrations is to be expected, not due to rational cognition of fear but due to predispositions of anxiety resulting from trauma. This mistrust can also be demonstrated on a smaller scale through the disposition against dissent in modern, post-genocide Rwanda. The escalation of the 1994 conflict is credited to be the result of massive campaigns of propaganda against the Tutsi people. Therefore, there is a cognitive schema within the population that opposition and negative attitudes towards the Tutsi or their established governments are predictors of massive strikes of violence. While this would not likely be the rationale of third-party observers, the stress response of trauma distorts the social and cognitive processing of information toward

attitudes of distrust.

With an understanding of this psychological perspective, a connection can be made back to political ramifications. Still, on the individual level, schema of mistrust are a significant predictor of aggression in relationship conflict. In a study of intimate partner aggression, it was concluded that mistrust is a predictor of physical and psychological aggression in relationships, and those who look for evidence of hostility, common to those with psychological predispositions for distrust due to traumatic past experiences more commonly use aggressive behavior to escalate the conflict. Although the intention of this study was centered around behaviors of intimate relationships, the psychological findings can be applied to other forms of cultural violence and the inclination of those who experienced large threats of violence and have become distrustful as a result, to become inclined to abusive or violent behaviors. In cultures developed around means of violence, like that of Rwanda which has been at the mercy of political violence before and after the 1994 genocide, including colonization which is a form of political violence often disregarded, an association of violence as conflict resolution is commonly a response to the general distrust of the population.

On a larger scale, distrust in entire governments is better observed as false perceptions of threat. Thomas Hobbes' theory of political realism was founded on the belief that fear of threats guided the behaviors of individuals and governments. The study of fear conditioning has led psychological and political researchers to argue that fear plays extensive roles in decision-making and actually "lasts longer than the threat [itself,] and can become a learned response that is embedded over time." There does not have to be a legitimate threat to a government to cause an aggressive shift in international relations, just the perception of a threat. Take into perspective the United States post-2001 terrorist attacks. Even decades later, the threat of terrorism is still one of the leading positions of American foreign and domestic policy despite there being no indication of realized threats. Once a threat is ingrained into a government, the perception becomes self-perpetuating and drives fear within a population and an institution without any fuel being added from international events. The fear of threat is deeply ingrained in the Rwandan Patriotic Front, a political faction born from violence and displacement, inspired by massive revolution, taking power during the genocide. The basis of this fear is contextualized throughout the republic's constitution and ingrained into its standing. The preamble of the country's constitution holds important language that symbolizes the demeanor of the Republic of Rwanda and the RPF from a very Hobbesian perspective:

"In the wake of the genocide that was organized and supervised by unworthy leaders and other perpetrators and that decimated

more than a million sons and daughters of Rwanda resolved to fight the ideology of genocide and all its manifestations and to eradicate ethnic, regional and any other form of divisions”

While the constitution established a democratic institution, it is evident in the rhetoric that the government was being formed on the political and ideological aftermath of genocide and that would shape their structure as a nation. This is not sole evidence of a position of perceived threat but reminds observers of the nation’s stance on the international stage. Specifically, there is a structural and psychopolitical history that cannot be ignored when analyzing their policy decisions. Regardless of the preamble and its declaration of democratic principles, the content of the Constitution shows a definite tussle between liberties and national security. In Article 34, rights of the press are limited along the bounds of “prejudice [to] public order and good morals”; Article 33 limits freedom of opinion in “accordance with conditions determined by law”; and Article 43 places broad limitations on the exercise of all freedoms to be “subjected to the limitations set by law to ensure the recognition and respect of others’ rights and freedoms, good morals, public order, and social welfare.” In the minds of the constitutional framers of Rwanda, there will always be a threat bound to an extremist free press. Speech like “the grave is only half full, who will help us fill it?” that flew rampant in 1994 contributed to the atrocities towards the Tutsi people. While this threat is more than likely of a false nature, the perception of it is enough to mark the domestic policy of the entire nation. National security holds greater importance within the Republic of Rwanda than democratic ideals. While personal attitudes within the state have begun to question the criminalization of dissent, in 2015 alone the Rwandan public voted to amend the constitution to allow President Kagame to remain in office for a third seven-year term. In post-genocide Rwanda, stability trumps democracy, not because of backwardness or indoctrination but because of their inclination to perceive and hold onto threats of their traumatic past.

Political violence has devastating effects on the world; it eradicates communities, imposes serious health and safety risks, terrorizes populations, and violates the natural rights of world citizens. What is important to also consider in the discussions of political violence and its consequences to populations is the psychological effects that transcend the violence itself. Psychological implications of political violence shape the establishment of governments and the ideologies of the people inside them. The creation of these governments moves on to create international and domestic policies that shape the psychologies of future generations; thus the effects of any form of social, cultural, or political trauma can sustain the changing conditions of a nation. Just as in Rwanda, where distrust of the previous administration drove the public desire for national security

in 2003, younger generations have become weary of the current administration’s violence towards public dissent and have grown distrustful of their government. This discussion is increasingly relevant in modern international media as political violence, such as that in Rwanda in 1994, is ever-occurring. This model of understanding political violence and its extensive repercussions on society is imperative to predicting changes in current social and political groups facing violence. The recent and historical events of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are citations of this psychopolitical theory. Not only could the recent escalation be analyzed similarly to that of Rwanda prior, but the effects of this century-long conflict should be investigated from a psychological perspective. What happens when political violence outlasts generations? How will the psychological deficits of children who grew up in massive violence campaigns alter the ideologies and psyches in a post-war society? What will be the political ramifications of the first-person witnesses as well as the distant witnesses created in a world of modern global media and thus shape global perspectives of international relations and nongovernmental organizations like the United Nations and their ability, or possibly inability, to effect change in devastating atrocities of human rights violations? It is imperative that these questions are investigated as research continues to further connect the psychological and political spheres. Ultimately, psychology cannot be separated from politics and can only better explain the ramifications of international happenings and political behaviors.

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# SPORT: A GOOD INVESTMENT OR A VEHICLE FOR SPORTS-WASHING?

RICARDO MILES

The World Cup is the biggest sporting event on the planet. An estimated 550 million people tuned in to watch Lionel Messi finally lift the one trophy that had eluded him his entire career. FIFA announced that around 5 billion people interacted with World Cup content throughout the tournament. The term “interacted” can be loosely defined as interacting with advertisements or posting commentary on social media platforms about the games themselves.

The first of its kind, the Qatar World Cup. It was the first global event to be held in an Arab country, a point of pride for its organizers who emphasized a need to unite Arab countries and showcase their culture to a wider audience. Yet, a lot of the conversation, long before the kickoff of the opening match between Ecuador and Qatar, questioned why the games were held here at all. Critics pointed to Qatar’s treatment of migrant workers who were being exploited to erect the stadiums and infrastructure needed to support such a huge event. Others pointed to the Qatari regime’s handling of LGBTQ+ rights and the loss of women’s rights in the country. Some critics pointed to the climate of the region. While the World Cup is typically played in the summer, temperatures in Qatar seemed extreme for players and spectators alike. Many former players who are now in the broadcasting space asked if this was good for the game, they wondered out loud if the World’s game deserved to be on such a divisive platform where in the eyes of most it was an attempt to “sports-wash” the image of the current regime. In 2008, British journalist James Montague published a book on

football culture, inquiring upon a striking concept in the wake of the Arab Spring:

“The aftermath of the Arab spring showed some of the games power, as does the new oil wealth of the gulf being channeled into football, through Manchester city, through PSG, and most recently through the Saudi takeover of Newcastle united and, of course through the 2022 world cup, which will be held in Qatar. Football has now become a matter of state, with Gulf monarchies using the game to launder reputations and create a new reality.”

The practice of “sports-washing” is the use of sports, entertainment, and tourism to help rehabilitate a government’s international image. Sports-washing was a term coined by Amnesty International in the face of investments by Gulf governments into European football, and FIFA international competitions.

The reality of having to build sports stadiums, surrounding transportation, and housing to host such a huge event, fell largely on an immigrant population of about 2 million workers from countries like Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the Philippines. They faced an enormous task; constructing eight stadiums, miles of road, metro tunnels, and luxury hotels. And yet, within the country, workers brought from abroad faced wage theft, illegal recruitment, and modern-day slave-like conditions. With such a small time frame to handle these construction projects, workplace safety is seen as an afterthought. Qatari officials have only reported



3 deaths related to construction, which strongly contrasts *The Guardian's* figures of about 6,500 deaths. An obvious difference is seen through sourcing. While *The Guardian* used sources from the home countries of workers to report deaths, Qatari officials use their own databases to count work related deaths. The need for accuracy in accounting for these deaths is viewed as a fight for compensation to the families of deceased workers. Minky Worden, Director of Global Initiatives at Human Rights Watch, calls for an accurate account of how many workers have died during construction, how they died, and who must be held accountable. "The responsibility for counting the deaths rests with the government," she tells *The Athletic*. "If deaths are misclassified as natural causes, it lets companies off the hook for deaths that they need to compensate the families for." A year following the tournament, these brutal conditions would come to light. Workers' rights advocates have pushed Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy to pay them the bonuses they're entitled to at the end of the World Cup. Migrant workers made up about 75 percent of the workforce and haven't been paid their post tournament bonuses, while their Qatari counterparts have.

The response from organizers was clear: this was an attack, mostly by Western and European media, that couldn't accept such a huge event being held by an Arab country. Organizers pointed to what they viewed as a double standard, accusing remarks by critics as having been rooted in racism and Islamophobia. Qatari officials insisted that the World Cup is a time to bring countries together and an opportunity to set aside political differences to share the joy of international football.

This drew many parallels to an equally divisive World Cup in Argentina, 46 years ago, where politics had been the center of the tournament. Argentina was amid the military dictatorship of Jorge Rafael Videla who used his position of power to repress political

opponents, union activists, and communist sympathizers. In total, an estimated 35 thousand Argentines were arrested and tortured by the government. Shockingly, it took place within the Navy School of Mechanics or ESMA which is a 10-minute walk from the iconic El Monumental stadium where the World Cup kicked off. Amnesty International raised concerns about these issues prior to the opening match and called for a boycott from major sponsors and participating countries. Other groups such as Madres de la Plaza de Mayo marched with white head scarves, protesting the disappearance of their children, the Swedish national team joined them as well.

Many felt in the aftermath of this World Cup, that the regime had been vindicated with the Swedish national team coach being quoted as saying, "Our stay here was marvelous; we're having a good time. I haven't seen anything that suggests this isn't a great country." Prisoners spoke about the bizarre experience of watching the World Cup alongside their captors. "If they won, we lost", wrote Graciela Daleo, in reference to the Argentine national team. Daleo was a University Professor and political prisoner who did slave work in ESMA. The final game took place on June 25th. On that day, she recalled the score of 3-1 on the television, in favor of Argentina. Daleo vividly remembers the screams of Jorge Eduardo "El Tigre" Acosta, a Senior Officer at the prison, "We won! We won!", as he kissed the prisoners' cheeks and shook their hands. Despite the time that has passed, the goal of both hosts had been the same-to help grow their international reputation and maximize short term profits. Aside from the political legitimacy both regimes gained for hosting the tournament, they also saw a significant economic impact. Analytic estimates by the *AngelouEconomics* group has shown that Qatar earned around \$17 billion dollars in revenue. The combination of such large profits, with the growth of football-focused infrastructure, including transportation systems to funnel large numbers of people into the stadiums, gives the country better opportunities to host larger sporting events in the future.

The success of the World Cup earned Qatar the rights to replace China as host of the Continental Major Asian Cup tournament following China's complications from COVID-19. The prize money for winning the Continental Cup, which Qatar won in 2019, is about \$5 million dollars alongside a reputation of prestige that comes with being the national title holder in the region. Relying on their successful oil and natural gas industries to fuel economic growth, most of these regional countries can reinvest such profits to help fund other industries. In times of natural resource decline, there becomes a race to diversify the local economy in order to reestablish sustainable growth, attempting to curtail such reliance on both oil and natural gas. However, only investing in local

national teams and the international level isn't enough. Both the World Cup and the Asian Cup only happen every four years. So, for countries who want to maximize their return on investment, they need to make a change in the type of football they are investing in.

We see that shift in 2005. Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, son of the Emir and heir to the throne, purchased a 70% controlling stake in Paris Saint Germain (PSG) with funds from the Qatari investment authority. The Parisian-based club, located in a major European city, was perfect for Qatari investment; it had a large fanbase in need of a substantial cash investment in order to rise to prominence once again. In theory, owners could provide Qatari players with opportunities to improve their performance in preparation for the 2022 World Cup at home by participating in matches with higher levels of competition. In addition to ownership, Qatar Airways became a main sponsor for PSG with other Qatari businesses sponsored the club through various means. Since the takeover, PSG has spent a sum of \$200 million euros in their effort to bring Neymar on to the team. Such effort, in turn, attracted Messi to their team and, as a result, allowed for the team's retention of their homegrown superstar Kylian Mbappe. With that, they turned the team into perennial winners being the top team in France 9 times since 2013. Amidst their success, the team simultaneously promoted Qatari companies and products and endorsed Qatar as a vacation destination.

The message was clear; the money and investment into the team was a push to win as many competitions as possible and promote Qatar to European consumers. Being able to outbid other clubs for big name players allowed PSG to stay competitive at the same time as it grew its brand and interact with global business partners who, if approached by the government themselves would face backlash or be apprehensive to do business with them due to their international reputation. Again, there is a diversification of PSG products, not only producing those usually associated with a sports team such as jerseys. They have additionally expanded with "streetwear fashion" clothing lines in collaboration with iconic American brands such as Jordan. PSG emerged within the market of modern fashion, marking their presence in Paris a hotspot of the fashion industry. Popularity of the brand name skyrocketed, once again placing Qatari investment at center stage with an almost philanthropic reputation.

Other gulf states have been shown to follow this investment model with the same goal. That is, to change their international perception from a brutal, repressive regime in the eyes of most Western consumers and tourists, to a tourist-friendly vacation spot. Another example of this is Saudi Arabia. They have a similar governmental system; a monarchy with a history of repressing political dissent and journalists, the outlawing of LGBTQ+ peoples,

and a blending of faith and law in their political structure. A clear example of the Saudi regime's ruthlessness is the death of a prominent journalist, Jamal Khashoggi, covering key events in the region. Events Khashoggi reported were the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the rise of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. He was close with the royal family and served as an advisor to the government until he fell out of favor, fleeing to the United States (US). Whilst in America, he wrote columns for the *Washington Post* in which he criticized the government.

On September 28, 2018, while in Istanbul, Khashoggi went to the Saudi Consulate, seeking documentation of his previous divorce in order to marry his then fiancé, Hatice Cengiz. He was told by officials to return on October 2nd to pick up his documents. Despite assurances to his fiancé that they were on Turkish soil, Khashoggi entered the Consulate on October 2nd, and never returned. For Two weeks, Prince Mohammed insisted Saudi officials knew nothing about the incident.

The version of events that lead to Khashoggi's death according to Turkish officials, vary, when compared to the Saudi statements. Saudi officials stated that 15 Saudi agents, who were assisted by 3 intelligence officers, arrived in Istanbul days before the murder. They additionally stated that the same group removed cameras and surveillance footage in the Consulate, before the journalist's arrival. Irfan Fidan, Istanbul's chief prosecutor stated that the journalist was "suffocated almost as soon as he entered the consulate, and that his body was dismembered and destroyed." Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared Khashoggi "was killed in cold blood by a death squad", and "that his murder was premeditated". Although Turkey attempted to charge the 20 Saudi nationals they believe took part in murder, Saudi Arabia rejected their extradition request. As a result, all men were put to trial in absentia with court-appointed Turkish lawyers representing the defendants who denied all charges.

Despite this clear case of a government once again suppressing a critic, even on foreign soil, and interfering with the judiciary process, it did not stop Saudi investment. The government continued to invest in football and other popular sports such as golf, formula 1, professional wrestling, and UFC abroad. The underlying motive was to improve their reputation and encourage foreign investment. The public investment fund (PIF) is a pool of investment funds that the Saudi government is using to help diversify the country's local economy and create crucial infrastructure that will integrate a growing youth population into the workforce. The drive to move towards a more sustainable economic growth is a part of Mohammed bin Salman's "Vision 2030".

The purchase of a large club in the premier league, Newcastle United, was made with the PIF. It raised questions around the

acceptability of permitting a government entity to invest in a sports team with such a massive pool of funding to draw from. This purchase, again, drew attention to the killing of Jamal Khashoggi. Khashoggi's fiancé wrote an open letter to Newcastle fans on *Twitter*, asking them to oppose the takeover by the PIF. Cengiz stated,

“I know that many of you are tempted by his [MBS's] offer to get out of the dire situation that has crippled your club for so many years. But the crown prince is accused of ordering Jamal's murder...My plea to you is to think [about] whether accepting Mohammed bin Salman's offer is really the right way out of the despair for your club and city...How can it be, when your club will be controlled by someone who should be tried for murder, as we would rightly expect for anyone accused of killing a loved one?”

Yet, for Newcastle fans, there was an ambitious plan put forth by new ownership. The plan aimed to invest not only in the team but in the infrastructure of the local community as a long-term investment. Ownership presented a 10-year timeline that promised to lead the team to a top 4 Finish and European qualification, expand the club's commercial arm, boost the youth academy's budget and build a new training ground with an overhaul of the youth academy and work with the local government to expand infrastructure in the city of Newcastle. A year after their takeover, an investment of around £210 million euros was made into the first team that recruited new players. The ownership group has narrowed down 3 suitable new sites in the city to build a new training ground, alongside a promise of £1.5 billion euros of investment promised by the local government. Simultaneously, an investment of £1 million euros has been made to upgrade their current training facilities. Additionally, development of the commercial area around the stadium has been set in motion following their purchase of 21 city-center properties that they promise to revive. Commercial growth came with a new sleeve sponsor, Noon an online retailer founded in 2016 by Mohamed Albbar alongside the PIF who owns 50 percent of the company in the Middle East, has facilitated the sale of Newcastle United merchandise to a new Arabic market.

Part of Vision 2030 is to increase participation in the sporting world, including women. According to Adwa Al-Arifi Deputy Sports Minister,

“In 2017, when Vision 2030 started, only seven per cent of females were physically active. That has increased to 20 per cent. Before Vision 2030 we had zero women's national teams. Today we have 37 women's national teams across different sports.”

Along with an increase in sports participation, women have gained the right to have passports, travel abroad, and live independently with the permission of a male guardian. These

are seen as progressive changes to women's rights. It is especially profound in a country that had been ranked amongst the bottom ten nations of the “Global Gender Gap” report by the *World Economic Forum*. Yet, in the same interview with the *Athletic*, the Deputy Sports Minister answered questions about human rights with a simple blanket statement. The deputy responded,

“I'm not the right person to answer those questions, “What I can say is that we respect cultures and religions around the world, and we expect others to respect our culture, traditions and religion as well. We are very proud of our roots and very attached to our culture.”

When faced with questions of a foreign sports entity being owned by the government, it is largely seen as another mere investment made by the PIF in a pool of many others, both in and outside of sport. It is done to secure the goals of Vision 2030, allowing Saudi Arabia to define itself on its own terms. Not, the definitions posed by Western and European outlets who misunderstand their culture, often using anti-Muslim and racist tropes in their reports of the country.

The question remains if investment by Gulf states is an attempt at soft power and influence or rather a mere case of sports-washing. Is the answer, however, less sinister? Are these investments, as they are told by officials, simply another asset in a growing portfolio seeking to diversify the economy of a country in desperate need of exactly that? An analysis by the *Doha Institute: The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies* gives insight into the answer. They point to the financial performance of Europe's elite clubs, the profit through matchday revenue, stadium hiring fees, sponsorship deals, merchandise sales, TV broadcast deals, prize money and player transfers. These make extremely profitable investments with the two Gulf-owned teams: Manchester city at \$766 million and PSG at \$661 million, seeing significant returns on their investments. They highlight the ability of Fly Emirates, a Gulf business, to sponsor the Spanish Getafe team in 2011, and team Real Madrid in 2017, for payments around \$336 million. The investment of Gulf States allowed them to “set a training strategy where young Qatari players can train and compete at the best European level”. The Gulf investments in England are attributed to their government's policy of a “leveling up agenda” that hopes to reduce the economic inequality between the Southeast region and the peripheries of England. The influence of Gulf states in Sport may grant them access to practice international lobbying but the investment by states into sport itself cannot counteract the high levels of international media attention that comes with some of the regime's actions. Instead, it can be used by a country's regime to practice soft power whilst interacting with a population that craves more individual freedoms as globalization and the access to information

# STUDENT ARTICLES

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grows. This can be seen in the statement made at the conclusion of the Qatari World Cup. The Emir Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani expressed,

“We fulfilled our promise at organizing an exceptional championship in an Arab country, which provided an opportunity for people in the world to explore the richness of our culture and the authenticity of our values.”

The lasting image at the conclusion of the World Cup in 2022 was of Leonel Messi. Before lifting the trophy, Messi was presented with a traditional Qatari garment, a Bisht. In a symbolic way, it emphasized the presence of Gulf states in the game and how their money continues to alter the way we consume the game at the highest level. Despite the claims of sports-washing, and the human rights record of the region, the Gulf’s investment has been highly lucrative for all parties, even those who claim to criticize them. In the same way the world’s greatest player wore a Bisht while lifting the World Cup trophy, the influx of Gulf investment in sport will be front and center so long as these regimes continue to place value in sport, and the opportunities it provides them both domestically and abroad.

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# WAR AND CHILDREN

ALEXIS TRILLAS

When it comes to war, and any armed conflict, there is only one group of blameless people: children. However, these children are forgotten by global and military leaders when nations decide to go to war. Historically, children are the ones to pay the ultimate price when war comes to their region. They are killed, maimed, raped, deprived of basic needs like food, water, and shelter, and mentally and emotionally ruined. The most crucial, formidable years of a person's development happens during their childhood. At such an early age, these children are exposed to horrific violence through observation, and forced participation in committing such horrific acts. The devastating and long-lasting influence of armed conflict affects the way children perceive the future, and inevitably changes the course of their lives. The resulting impacts on children in war zones are both direct and indirect, either of which influence the overall quality of their "childhood" experience. These circumstantial effects are seen in changes to their physical health, environment, education, social elements, sexual violence, and mental health.

The impact of exposure to violence on children was largely ignored until recently. This shift was brought about by the publication of Graca Machel's report, "Impact of Armed Conflict on Children" in 1996 by the United Nations (UN). This groundbreaking report exposed, and forced the world's acknowledgement of the violent atrocities and human rights violations committed against the children of armed conflict. The report identified eight major issue areas: child soldiers, refugees

and internally displaced children, sexual exploitation and gender-based violence, landmines and unexploded ordinances, sanctions, health and nutrition, promoting psychological recovery and social reintegration, and education. Then, in 1999, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1261 which identified, and condemned, six grave violations committed against children in times of conflict; the recruitment and use of children, killing or maiming of children, sexual violence against children, attacks against schools or hospitals, abduction of children, and the denial of humanitarian access. Both the 1996 report and Resolution 1261 were significant steps towards addressing the needs of children affected by war. However, not nearly enough progress has been made. For example, in 2022, the UN verified 27,180 total grave violations against children. Around the world, armed conflicts continue to rage on with extraordinarily little reverence for the 468 million children living in active combat zones. This major problem has only been exacerbated by modern warfare technology, and a lack of accountability by the perpetrators of these violations.

## I. PHYSICAL HEALTH

One type of impact that war-affected children experience relates to their physical health. This is shown primarily by physical injuries, healthcare access, and malnutrition. It is important to note that the information and data about children that are maimed due to armed conflict is incomplete as many injuries go unreported. In 2022, the UN found that among the six grave violations against children, the highest number of violations fell



*Photo: Belal Khaled/Anadolu via Getty Images*

to the killing (2,985) and maiming (5,655) of 8,631 children. This number means at least 5,655 children were injured so severely that it caused lasting damage, and a part of their body will no longer work as it should. This has become part of a larger trend in which children are targeted by armed forces and senselessly attacked, leaving them either dead or damaged. The vast majority of injured children come from lower income communities where high-quality medical services, such as prosthetics, are unattainable. Thus, visibly handicapped children are faced with social judgment by their community. This ostracization, on top of being maimed, shatters their confidence and prolongs their recovery time.

Furthermore, the lack of access to proper healthcare is commonplace for communities engulfed in armed conflicts. For example, the vaccination rates among children in these areas are low. This is due to a lack of providers, inadequate funds, a loss of confidence in medicine, displacement, and the destruction of infrastructure for delivery and storage purposes, and civilian displacement. While progress has been made on this issue, still too many children are suffering, and perishing from preventable diseases. With low vaccination rates comes an increase in the rate of children becoming sick with, and dying from, diseases such as polio, measles, and more.

Another challenge facing children living in conflict zones is malnutrition. In wartime, shortages of essentials such as food and water become widespread. This can have an especially negative effect on young children. The long-term consequences

of war devastation and inadequate nutrition are poor health outcomes in adulthood. One study found that children born in areas with average destruction, during World War II (WW2), were approximately 0.6 inches shorter on average in adulthood. Children who lived in the city of Cologne which suffered more severe bombardments during the war were an inch shorter in adulthood compared to the same cohorts in Munich. The physical consequence of malnutrition on height has the potential to be passed on for generations, but more than that, malnutrition also influences the trajectory of a child's cognitive development. When a person is not given the opportunity to be physically healthy, they struggle to focus on anything else. According to Maslow's *hierarchy of needs*, the most important ones to satisfy are physiological, like hunger. Until they satisfy this hunger, they are unable to deal with other instinctual necessities, such as safety and love, because their energy is centered around food. Children living in the midst of armed conflicts are concerned with basic survival, and it is the unfortunate truth for children born around the world in regions marked by instability. This affects their future because the children are experiencing stunted social, emotional, cognitive, and moral development.

## II. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Children must also combat changes to their physical environment. This may include watching their homeland get decimated, dealing with displacement, and becoming refugees.

Throughout armed conflicts, the destruction of property is a common occurrence, but the severity can vary from the demolition of a few buildings, a village, or an entire city. To witness the only home that you know, and love turn into piles of rubbish can be overwhelming for anybody, but it is even more overwhelming for children. In the case of Palestinian children living in an active combat zone, who were exposed to home demolition and bombardment, 59% reported having severe post-traumatic stress reactions. Experiencing traumatic events similar to home demolition can lead children to develop a negative outlook on life, and lack social trust. This disillusionment, at such an early age, can have long-lasting and far-reaching consequences for their psyche. Their emotional immaturity, combined with their limited life experience, makes it difficult for them to process the loss of a home, or even the loss of friends and family members.

It is an all-too-common reaction by families to send their children to “safer” places in the event, or threat, of an attack on their home. Children who are sent away might be spared physical injuries, however they are not spared from experiencing other forms of trauma. Eventually, the reality of the child’s displacement sets in, developing feelings of extreme loneliness. This can result in behaviors that decrease their self-esteem. The separation of children from their families, more specifically their parents, place them at a greater risk of suffering malnutrition, disease, sexual violence, physical attack, and abduction by armies. Children who become refugees face quite a few new challenges in their new host country, including isolation and a lack of resources. Adjusting to an unfamiliar environment that has different cultural traditions, language, geographical landscape and environment, as well as new social norms and expectations can be overwhelming for a child. Additional issues that refugees commonly encounter are limited play spaces for children, high social density, low quality housing, a lack of space, and little privacy.

“Children maintaining refugee status lack equal educational opportunities and accessibility to community based recreational centers due to a lack of resources, inadequate language skills, and maintenance of temporary residence status in the host country.”

Without support from the community and family, refugees contend with struggles that can make it virtually impossible to successfully adjust to a new country. This can lead to depression, low academic achievement, unemployment, and substance abuse.

### III. ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Arguably, the most consequential factor in the overall health and well-being of children is their access to education. When children are able to continue receiving an education, they are

more likely to better cope with traumatic events. They are able to develop a certain level of resiliency that can aid in the recovery and rehabilitation process, despite living in an active war zone. Schools provide children with structure as well as a sense of normalcy, a key factor in minimizing the psychological issues that children exposed to violence typically present.

However, when children lose access to school, problems appear not only for the youth, but whole communities as well. School facilities can be seen as a beacon of hope and a promise for a better future, which is why communities hold them in such high regard and why their destruction can be devastating to communities. The destruction of school facilities is one of the ways that armed groups undertake to destabilize and undermine the government. Armed conflicts are extremely expensive, which limits the resources available for educational services such as paying teachers, maintaining school structures, and providing educational materials. By weakening the government, armed forces think they will win the war. However, it is not the government they directly harm, rather it is the children, the future world leaders. Arguably, this is the reason they do it. Armed forces have been known to take over schools and use them as an outpost to conduct operations which effectively puts an end to schooling in that area. Another threat to schooling comes in the form of teachers who are threatened, attacked, and killed. In the Nampula province, seventy-five teachers have been killed. Likewise, in Palestine, it was reported that teachers have been arrested, and even killed, in front of students. Following the 1994 Rwandan genocide, approximately seventy-five percent of teachers were killed, fled the country, or were imprisoned on genocide charges. This can discourage people from becoming teachers in these regions due to genuine fears for their health and safety. Without school, children have more free time. With this, they are more vulnerable to abduction, resulting in voluntary or forced participation in a militia. When children do not receive an education, they develop a pessimistic attitude with depressive symptoms which results in feelings of hopelessness. Even when children are finally able to resume their education, they struggle to adapt to new educational environments, compromising their ability to concentrate academically. Furthermore, the downfall of educational facilities can be reflective of the downfall of society.

### IV. SOCIETAL FACTORS

With war comes changes to the surrounding community, social norms, and family realignment. It is not surprising to learn that the societal changes that children in conflict zones must deal with, end with far-reaching consequences. The societal changes that result from armed conflict include the reduction of social

welfare programs, readjustment of familial roles, and shifts in the balance and values of a community. When there is a breakdown of law and order, violence can become widespread, and children are often targets of physical and sexual violence. As wars erupt, there are changes to the home front when one parent leaves for combat, and the other is left to find a job that compensates for the former's absence. With this, there is a shift regarding the expectations of the older children. The oldest children are expected to drop out of any academic, athletic, or other extracurricular activities. In these situations, boys generally get an arduous job, while the girls stay home to take over domestic duties and child rearing. The restructuring of the family dynamic is referred to as *compensatory realignment*. As a result of wars, children not only lose their parental figures and academic opportunities, but their sense of safety and innocence as well.

### V. SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence is one of the most prevalent, yet underreported violations that affect children in armed conflicts. Rape, child marriages, prostitution, and the spread of HIV/AIDS are just a few of the pressing issues that these children must contend with. The victims of sexual violence are predominantly girls, however, young boys are also victims, and these cases are largely unreported. Targeting young girls for sexual violence is frequently used as a method by opposing forces to torment, dehumanize, and demoralize the civilian populations. In addition, adolescent girls are vulnerable to sexual violence because of the misconstrued beliefs that their age and size makes them less likely to have sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS or that if someone infected with HIV/AIDS has sex with a virgin then they will become cured. These false claims place young girls at a higher risk of contracting, and possibly dying from, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Another form of sexual violence that girls suffer from is child marriages. Girls are routinely forced into child marriages by their families for socioeconomic reasons, through abduction by rebel forces, and during times of regional instability. These marriages often result in the end of their education, and an increased vulnerability to violence, abuse, poverty, and pregnancy. It is important to note that context matters when discussing issues of child marriages. The differences between conflicts, communities, cultures, location and time, are all crucial factors that need to be considered. There is a significant lack of research, reports, and evidence regarding child marriage in armed conflicts. Nevertheless, there have been some studies done on the war in northern Uganda, and the aftermath of the forced marriage system perpetrated by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). This system involved abducted girls who were forced into marriage and

impregnation in order to create a new generation of LRA fighters. There were high rates of infant mortality caused by starvation, disease, and injuries from relentless attacks and bombings. The mothers and children that returned home dealt with severe social stigma which led to violence, poverty, injury, illness, and socio-economic marginalization. The consequences of forced marriages extend beyond the child brides themselves, and their children. In this case, like so many others, it is the innocent victims who are punished for the violent actions committed by another. Forced prostitution is another type of sexual violence upon children, affecting both girls and boys. Unfortunate circumstances such as poverty, shortages of basic essentials, and insufficient livelihood options can drive children to prostitution. It is very well documented that there is an increase of child prostitution alongside the arrival of peacekeeping forces. In addition, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases tend to spread rapidly in areas of conflict and refugee camps. These diseases, if left untreated, can result in pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility, and even death. Sexual violence survivors often believe the physical damage is not as severe as the psychological damage that is caused by personal degradation, loss of social status, humiliation, isolation, and familial dishonor.

### VI. MENTAL HEALTH

Notably, the incredible toll on a child's mental health can devastate them for life. The most common and heavily researched war-related stress reaction is the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A study of Palestinian schoolchildren living in Hebron revealed that 77.4% of children showed symptoms of moderate to severe PTSD. Along with PTSD, research has shown an increase in the levels of depression and anxiety among children exposed to armed conflicts. A study of emotional problems in Palestinian children found that anxiety induced issues were more prevalent in children who were indirectly exposed to bombardment and home demolition than those directly exposed. The study revealed that 39% of indirectly exposed children experienced symptoms of anxiety compared to 22% of directly exposed children. Furthermore, the impact on child development goes beyond that. Research has shown that children living physically closer to high conflict zones are exposed to more frequent and severe violence, and thus are more likely to experience higher levels of psychological symptoms. In response to trauma, children can exhibit emotional problems such as fear, anxiety, aggression, anger, and sleep issues. They may additionally exhibit regressive behavior, behavioral problems, and difficulty focusing or thinking clearly. For example, one study on trauma exposure in pre-school children in the Gaza Strip indicates that trauma exposure increases

the risk of behavioral and emotional problems such as temper tantrums, attention-seeking, and hyperactivity in this age group. Children react to stress by developing somatic symptoms, physical symptoms that have no medical explanation, such as chronic neck and back pain, stomachaches, headaches, and fatigue. However, one study found that perceived parental support acts as a protective factor against the impact of traumatic war events on children's mental health. Supportive and nurturing parents can improve the child's mental health, and can be a contributing factor to improved coping strategies and resiliency. The neurodevelopmental effects of war exposure consist of impaired intelligence, cognition, memory, and attention. Studies have shown that children with trauma have delayed cognitive development, academic difficulties, and lower IQ scores. Chronic traumatic events can lead to memory problems because of neural injury to the hippocampus. The exposure to trauma interferes with homeostasis, generating an automatic response, and causes a new state of equilibrium that affects all parts of the brain. In their paper "Consequences of Child Exposure to War and Terrorism", Joshi and O'Donnell (2003) explain a few key factors that compromise cognitive function. Firstly, an altered cortical homeostasis results in dysregulation of cognitive and narrative memory. Secondly, disruptions to the limbic system result in emotional memory impairment. Thirdly, disruptions to the midbrain region are implicated in motor memory impairments, noting that traumatic activation of the brainstem is involved in the creation of physiological state memories. In order for new memories to be stored, they need to be processed in the hippocampus. However, if the hippocampus has been thoroughly damaged, while old memories will stay intact, many new memories are unable to be stored. This helps explain why people who were traumatized by exposure to violence as children, may experience the future with expectations of violence, thus, interfering with their ability to fully immerse themselves in positive experiences.

In some instances, children are able to overcome the trauma of living in a war zone, and develop a certain level of resiliency that allows them to become productive members of society as adults. The factors that are attributed to the development of resilience in war-exposed children are: active attempts to cope with stress, cognitive competence, experiences of self-efficacy, self-confidence and positive self-esteem, a stable emotional relationship with at least one parental figure, a supportive educational climate, parental models of behavior that encourage constructive coping with problems, and social support from people outside the family. While these factors enhance resiliency, they cannot guarantee it. Resilience depends upon the person. A child can be given every opportunity and resource, but the individual children are the only ones that dictate how their trauma affects them. It is important to

remember that children living in war zones witness and experience extremely vicious and barbaric acts of violence, thus, reactions of PTSD, depression, problems sleeping, and regressive behaviors are not uncommon. They are to be expected, and must be taken with empathy and compassion for the individual.

This article has reviewed the literature on the impact of armed conflict on children spanning decades, discussing both short-term and long-term consequences of war-exposure. Armed conflicts impact children by destroying their innocence, their optimistic worldview, and their aspirations in life. It devastates their childhood, effectively ending the life they could have lived. Political and military leaders are focused on "winning" the battle, but can anyone ever "win" when children are traumatized, killed, and harmed? The cost that children are forced to pay is far too high. Henceforth, evacuating, treating, and reintegrating children into society must be a top priority. Children are the future of the world. If they are not given the possibility to succeed, and to live a life they are most proud of, then the world as we know it is destined to fail.

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# CHINA: CLIMATE CONCERNS AND FOREIGN POLICY

BRANDON SANTOS

The world is at a critical moment when it comes to climate change. Any policy and initiative for action will require global cooperation or result in complete failure. While many countries pride themselves on their ambitious goals, their abilities to obtain these goals and carbon net neutrality vary greatly. Western ideals continue to dominate discussions of responsibility for achieving global carbon neutrality, which limits cooperation from other global superpowers. It is important to remember the key emitters of greenhouse gasses: the United States, India, and China. They each have the highest populations, and consequently, the highest energy consumption. Without the cooperation of countries with the highest emissions, the goal to avoid a 2°C increase from the current average temperature will be impossible. The purpose of this article is to discuss China's past and future efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions and to determine whether they will become a beacon of hope, or a bastion of disaster in the fight against climate change.

When arguing about climate change, the first focus should be on the root cause: greenhouse gas emissions. Since 2019, China has been the number one global emitter of greenhouse gasses (GHGs), totaling over 12 billion metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> in that year alone. While the U.S. and India are the second and third largest emitters of GHGs, respectively, it would be almost impossible to fight climate change on a global level without China's cooperation. For this reason, it is important to analyze the prior commitments and promises made by China, relative to similar environmental causes.

## I. PAST GOALS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The very first global treaty for climate change was the United Nations (UN) Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The People's Republic of China readily signed the agreement in 1992, which exclusively set regulations for developed countries. At the time, and to this day, China has been considered a developing nation, which alleviated pressure from the UN to implement fossil fuel regulations on China. In 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was signed by 194 countries, but again, China was excused as a developing country. During the last two decades, China's political and economic power has significantly shifted the state's position to it becoming a great power. This change has elicited greater expectations of China by the international community, especially on environmental issues. However, within its recurrent five-year plans, China distinguished their own goals to fight climate change. The state's first mention of environmental protections occurred in the discussion of the 1973 plan. In 1979, the first environmental laws were established. Overall, the country still viewed nature as self-renewable, and something to be conquered under the Maoist views of the old administration. It wasn't until the mid-2000s when the Hu-Wen administration acknowledged that rapid industrialization damaged the environment, signifying the need to prioritize nature. While the post-Maoist view continued the prioritization of people, it significantly shifted the exploitative view of nature as an unlimited resource.

## II. REFORESTATION

One of the most prominent features of China's environmental policies is the process of reforestation. Beginning in 1978, the Three-North Shelterbelt program is a 72 year effort to replenish about 14 percent of China's forests. The project, also referred to as the "Green Wall", has many goals, some of which have been achieved in the last few decades. The main goal of the project was to limit the spread of the Gobi Desert, which has been more or less successful. By planting rows of trees along the outskirts of fertile areas, these reforested areas act as moisture retainers and block harmful winds. The Three-North Shelterbelt Program employs local farmers to facilitate the project, which keeps rural communities out of poverty. Local farmers are further incentivized to join the project as the plants grown in the belt keep sand from blowing into their crops. Sandstorms are very common across the Gobi, spreading dust and other particles through the air all the way to Beijing. So far, the forests have prevented most dust storms from reaching Beijing. Recently, however, the rate of sandstorms have increased exponentially over the past few years. In March 2021, sandstorms coated Tiananmen Square with dust for the first time in 6 years, instilling doubt in the effectiveness of the Green Wall.

While the Green Wall is failing in its ability to completely prevent severe air conditions in China's capital city, the forest's secondary goal to sequester carbon has turned into a triumph. Forests act as carbon sinks, natural environments which take in and trap more carbon than they release. Consequently, the project has helped significantly in China's efforts to become carbon neutral, balancing carbon emissions with carbon absorption. Carbon neutrality is the goal of most countries. China has announced plans to peak emissions in 2030 and become completely carbon neutral by 2060. Unfortunately, this would be 10 years later than the projected goal set by the Paris Agreement in order to keep the global average temperature from rising 2°C. In order to meet the goal set by the agreement's standards, China would have to either ramp up tree plantings, or limit fossil fuel emissions drastically.

## III. CHINA'S CURRENT GOALS

Since the Industrial Revolution, countries have had a love/hate relationship with coal. The People's Republic of China, in particular, is the largest user of coal to this day, and its reliance has helped the country grow significantly in the past three decades. While certain officials have made claims that it is unachievable to reduce China's reliance on coal, the country has already made good progress toward replacing non-renewable energy with green power. In the past few years, China has closed down 70.45 gigawatts of coal powered plants. Furthermore, it is expected that fossil fuel emissions for the country may peak this year, allowing China to reverse its pattern of rising emissions in the next few years. What stands in the way of the country's efforts at carbon neutrality is a startling trend of developing

new coal plants, despite the push to close down old ones and pursue cleaner fuels. Disguised under the term "energy security," interest in coal has skyrocketed as a cheap energy source to boost local economies and create job security. During periods of global unrest, such as the war in Ukraine causing the European embargo on Russian oil, many countries have opted for finding alternative domestic sources of energy. Coal is a guaranteed fuel source, compared to wind and solar which are both heavily dependent on weather patterns. In a country that has faced historic rolling blackouts during the past decade, coal eliminates the threat of continuous power shortages. During 2021, there were electricity restrictions in about 22 provinces in China, fueling the desire for stable energy. It makes sense to switch back to coal for the short run, as it provides a cheap and quick alternative. Ironically, it sets a contradictory precedent to denounce its defects and then actively pursue its benefits. In certain provinces like Yulin, coal has brought back commerce and life to a struggling city. However, as the price of coal sways, so does the economic sensibility of its fuel.

Mixed signals continue to be sent by Beijing as the government announced subsidies to be paid toward these brand new coal facilities. These payments allow the plants to recover financially during periods of inaction, but they further incentivize the building of coal plants in the short term. The over reliance on a dying fuel may both morally and economically bankrupt China's clean energy efforts. Thus, many environmentalists have grown concerned with Beijing's announcement.

Ironically, China is also the largest manufacturer of clean energy resources, including wind and solar. As 60% of all global solar panels are constructed in China annually, the nation generates half of the world's cumulative solar energy. Despite their large share of solar panels both in use and manufacturing, China's solar power only covers a small fraction of their total energy used. As of 2024, solar panels only generate 3.5% of China's total energy, compared with fossil fuels constituting a majority of energy generation at 66%. For wind and hydroelectric power, it is also the global leader, making up 6.2% and 17.8% of China's total energy.

## IV. TRANSPORTATION

Similar to many other countries, transportation accounts for a substantial amount of fossil fuel emissions in China. Second to the United States, China's transportation sector accounts for about 2% of global greenhouse gas emissions. This alarming statistic is due to China's large manufacturing sector and exceptionally large population. Eliminating carbon from this sector is key in the state's attempt at carbon neutrality. The World's Resource Institute estimates that if China were to continue with their current decarbonization plans, the country could reduce its road transport emissions by 50% in 2060. If



China went even further, and pushed the trucking industry to become completely green, they could cut emissions by 93-95%. With that being said, China should become more ambitious in its attempt to cut its transportation related carbon emissions.

## V. A POSSIBLE FUTURE

An expansion of China's influence abroad seems to be the country's next main goal. With the increase in domestic infrastructure, and therefore buying power, China has exercised more influence in global affairs. More specifically, China has been growing increasingly interested in attaining power in the Global South. The Global South, sometimes also referred to as the Group of 77, are developing nations, typically located in the Southern Hemisphere or South of developed nations. Countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia typically make up the term Global South, with exceptions of developed nations. To accomplish this goal, China has designated the One Belt, One Road initiative to incentivize its companies to invest in projects overseas. Africa has been of particular interest to China. Chinese companies have put forth great financial investments into the development and expansion of many infrastructure projects throughout the region. While China's intentions are seemingly positive, there may be more at play than meets the eye. As China buys more shares of Parabola Steel Milling Company in South Africa, growth of China's steel sector may move overseas. China is the number one producer of steel in the world, which attributes to much of its fossil fuel emissions. Governmental regulations and international green movements have put pressure on Chinese steel companies to move towards more sustainable practices. With the benefit of less government insight and lax enforcement, Chinese steel companies would be able to circumvent carbon emission restrictions in mainland China by moving operations abroad. Similarly, in Pakistan and Kenya, Chinese companies have sponsored coal plants despite local environmental concerns, all designated under the One Belt, One Road initiative. While these companies are independent from the Chinese government, it does not excuse the government for providing resources and incentives to act abroad to disrupt other nations. After all, in its Action Plan for Carbon Dioxide Peaking Before 2030, the Chinese government declared to make the One Belt, One Road initiative an environmentally sustainable project, focusing on "green infrastructure, green energy, and green finance."

## VI. CONCLUSION

While China's foreign policy will need to be reevaluated on account of its apparent inconsistencies, China's domestic policies appear to be a triumph. The country leads the way in terms of solar and wind generated energy, and will grow significantly in this sector in the coming years. China's transportation sector is slowly rolling out energy efficient vehicles, but a complete overhaul on trucking could drastically reduce carbon emissions. As for its past policies, the 1978 Three North

Shelterbelt Program is the greatest example of China's willingness to pursue long-term environmentally sustainable solutions to modern problems. The Green Wall remains one of China's largest carbon sinks but its efficiency at blocking Northerly winds will continue to be tested by the side effects of climate change. As China reaches out through its One Belt, One Road initiative, it could lead disadvantaged countries toward both economic stability and environmental security. If China follows through with its environmental promises, humanity will have a better chance of surviving the new challenges of climate change.

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# THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR AND US TAX DOLLARS

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In the last decade, war in Syria has remained prevalent in mainstream and international news, with coverage in the United States concentrated on station Al-Tanf and its corresponding attacks due to a now seven-year-long American occupation of the area. Al-Tanf is a small outpost base located near the Southern border of Syria and is currently a hot topic for American citizens and politicians alike to determine whether it is worth staying. Since ISIS control of the territory began, Russian brokerage has resulted in heavy US patrolling of the station and eventual occupation not long after. The involvement of the United States in this conflict is widely debated amongst nations and NGOs as well as domestic politicians and American citizens. While the last three presidential administrations have all continued their aid to the war efforts in Syria, the devastating effects of economic and military aid have proven to be more harmful than good to both domestic and international fronts, resulting in the death and destruction of the Syrian population and government, the tension of international relations due to excessive and threatening allyship, and economic turmoil within the United States.

The country of Syria is united with many of its Middle Eastern neighbors, such as Iran and Egypt, under a common religion. Islam dominates as the most practiced religion, creating groups whose structures evolved along the bounds of their faith and cultures. Between 1951 and 1961, Syria and Egypt were partnered under the majority lead of the Egyptian President 'Abd al-Nasir with Syrian military and government playing smaller, somewhat inferior roles. This inferiority led to discussions of bettering personal representation

across the Mediterranean Sea. The military group committee called the Ba'th Party, some "exiled" in Cairo, spoke of Arab nationalism where each Arab nationality was equal, though seemingly unreachable. In 1961, the exiled Ba'th members and Syrian officers met to discuss the staging of a coup to take back possession of Syria. This allowed for the al-Assad family, through Hafez Al-Assad, to take hold of the presidency in Syria and draft a new constitution, creating a hereditary lineage of continuation. With the death of Hafez Al-Assad in 2000, power passed to his son, Bashar. Bashar al-Assad holds the current presidency and has faced a revolution attempt.

The revolution consists of a myriad of different coalitions banded together in efforts to overthrow the sectarian government and establish democratic practices in its place. The population of Syria was soon divided between rural or urban classes areas; those poorer and not of the Alawi sect created a socio-cultural divide unique to the nation. The al-Assad family descends from an Alawi community found in Syria that was traditionally a small minority, conforming to Shia Islamic religious practices. The loyalties to one's community were binding, and thus Alawi people who were once found persecuted and discriminated against found closure and comfort becoming the elite and favored in governance. The polarization and little guarantee of class movement harbored enough resentment for decades culminating in the revolution in March 2011.

The civil war in Syria has outlived three different American administrations, each of whom has had different approaches regarding war efforts in Syria. The Obama administration used troops

stationed in Syria to defend against attacks from Russian and Iranian forces, though it had a heavier dependency on proxy groups like the Kurds. Kurdish troops have long fought alongside the United States, beginning with the People's Protection Units (a Syrian armed group that rallied against loyalists led by the U.S.) allyship in 2011. The Trump administration promised to pull out of the war indefinitely, although, during President Trump's time in office, he sustained aid to Kurdish proxy troops after threatening the economy of Turkey, which was at the time attacking the Kurds. The Biden Administration has recently reversed the processes put in place by the previous administration. It has issued in a letter to the Speaker of the House that Syrian aid will continue with the addition of more troops being stationed in Syria. President Biden is quoted saying that America does not seek war with Iran or Syria, but rather chooses to protect their people forcefully if needed.

The spending and aid of the United States to Syrian revolutionary fighters has increased throughout the years. Campaigns advertised different messages to the public, though ultimately, tax money would regardless be spent to continue the decade-long war. However, would the spending on military-occupied bases such as Al-Tanf prove to be a necessary and beneficiary expense of American taxes to aid the war effort? Simply put, no. Money being spent in Al-Tanf has had very little effect in swaying the war and could be spent elsewhere. Fifteen billion dollars have been donated to Syria for the assistance of Syrian refugees throughout the region. In the first year of the revolution, beginning in March 2011, the United States spent approximately forty-five million dollars in aid. Between 2011-2018, the total amounts close to ninety-three million in American tax dollars being spent over the span of just 7 years towards this war effort.

Militia occupation and attacks have created unsafe areas for civilians and casualties have increased past what some may argue reasonable for a battle held at a standstill. Civilians who once lived peacefully in Syria have only known years of conflict and fighting. Many have been misplaced in a desperate diaspora seeking refuge, smuggled across borders to escape death in their backyard. Leaving the only home they have known offers safer chances of survival, across seas in boats filled with people and through borders in cramped and non-occupiable spaces. From the 2011 uprising to March 2023, it is documented that 230,224 Syrian civilians have died. Accounts from survivors of the war describe the difficulties of existence in a country they once called home. Since the war began, people have been kidnapped, shot, executed, and tortured. Staying in an area where violence is met with more violence only creates larger war zones, further pushing Syrians out of their homes. Attacks from the U.S. instigating those from Iran and the Syrian government only create larger problems and kill more innocent people.

Nonetheless, there is still hope for those who remain in Syria,

and the United States has a hand to play in that as well. Bombings and suicide attacks from all sides of the fight caused damage. Syria's government has allied with Iran and Russia, who have provided aid in attacks against the United States and Syrian democratic organizations. Bombs have been targeting weapons storage facilities to cripple opposing forces which President Biden has used as a message of strength and determination to protect American lives and interests. The relief team and provisions provided by taxpayers in America have had many beneficiaries; although billions of dollars, this money has allowed many to have emergency food and healthcare and given better opportunities for the people in need. The United States also offers relocation and asylum for those fleeing the war. After running and being smuggled through borders in dangerous conditions, places like Sacramento offer refuge for families in need. Even with the financial aid provided by the United States, the safety of citizens is not always guaranteed. Death is a close companion with war, and one continuing for over a decade is not unfamiliar with it. 177,000 of non-Syrian forces have died amid the violence.

Although collateral damage is to be expected during war, thousands are being rescued and relocated by the U.S. military, as the fatalities continue to climb. In 2011, the Syrian population was at a high of twenty-two million people. In the next five years, the population decreased to less than nineteen million, with a reported loss of 3,500,000 no longer in Syria either killed or displaced. In 2019, over 100,000 people were 'missing' for a myriad of reasons, including sex trafficking and kidnappings. Additionally, American journalists, photographers, and fighters have been taken prisoner of war and tortured for up to multiple months. The severity and ruthlessness of the people taking those cannot be counteracted by any amount of American spending. The food received will not last when being smuggled over the borders of Syria into places that will provide asylum. The dangers of the war persist without the millions of dollars coming from the pockets of citizens across the ocean, hence there is no use for consistent streams of money to aid a war where more people are getting hurt than they are being freed with the American aid.

Unrest in Syria has proven to incorporate bordering and allied countries, such as Iran and Russia, though the effect could be dire to political and economic relationships. The allegiance between Iran, Turkey, Russia, and the government of Syria has begun to crumble as international attacks create conflicts affecting tolerance and economic deals. Syrian loyalists, Russia, and Iran want to expel America from Al-Tanf and any neighboring areas to influence other groups and synthesize their plans. This conflict has furthered strain between the United States and Russia in which heavy miscommunication and diplomatic disagreements have been frequent. Additionally, the continuous interference by Iran has led to extremely hostile conditions in Iraq and Syria. These conflicts increase the fragility

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of U.S. tolerance and threaten economic turbulence. Due to the longstanding foreign policy of defending democracy, America has depended on economic sanctions, and Syria is no exception. Many critics argue these sanctions are doing less good than originally hypothesized. The tougher sanctions will only harm the Syrian people or prevent cities from rebuilding, and even seemingly insignificant sanctions would create both diplomatic and economic isolation of Syria. By limiting American interference politically and militarily, the people of Syria have a better chance of surviving without isolation, poverty, or an increase in military attacks. The enforcement of pro-democratic government is an important concept for the United States, defended globally, but if that involvement has failed to alter political stagnation, then the U.S. has contributed too little to justify the occupation and continued spending.

American troops stationed in Al-Tanf have not been committed to military exercises designated on liberating Syria, and contribute to Israeli troops in their moment of peril and civil war rather than focusing completely on helping Syria. America is keeping its position in Syria because it would aid more countries than not. Currently, occupation in Syria creates a struggle for Iranian forces to move weapons to Lebanon to use against Israel. Israel is, too, aiding America in its time of need; since January of 2023, Israel has struck targets in Syria with F-35 joint-strike fighter jets. Missiles that are being used against Iranian proxy groups are supplied by the U.S. Israel has been refusing to aid Ukraine but still uses unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) sparingly. With the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the United States has planned to provide almost \$ 14.3 billion to Israel, alongside the constant stream of aid to Syria.

By aiding different countries in their time of need, America has been keeping a structured limit on how far the war can ascend. With Syria, the stream of influence and alliances between them and Kurdish proxy groups keeps a limit economically and militarily on other countries like Iran. America's power as a first-world country is not to be underestimated; blocking nuclear and other missile weapons from entering Lebanon prevents the Syrian Civil War from evolving into something more globally challenging. However, good Samaritan efforts by the United States have resulted in resources being spread too thin. America was using the occupation of Syria to support oil revenue sourced from Syria's surrounding areas. But only so much money can be spent on the Middle Eastern conflicts. Given the United States' current trillion-dollar deficit, domestic spending should be prioritized before aid for international conflicts that do not seem to be working toward resolution.

The United States military occupation in Al-Tanf has proven to be an unnecessary expense of American citizens' tax dollars in a civil war that has no foreseeable end. While U.S. aid has helped save many lives from the war, American occupation has ultimately contributed

to far more deaths than lives saved. Occupation has led foreign opposition to bomb and attack American soldiers, catching civilians in the crossfire and increasing fatalities further. Of course, an ideal solution would be a political compromise between parties; however, this does not seem to be foreseeable at this time. Should the conflict end soon, it is expected that justice for war crimes will be handed down. By enforcing penalties for countries who are continuing to side with a country hurting innocent people, the U.S. is making the decision to aid the totalitarian government or strain relationships with one of the largest countries with great influence on international economic relations. Ultimately, the actions of the United States during this decade-long conflict have resulted to be destructive, and damaged the economy of the United States, and Syria too.

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# THE DECISION TO PULL AMERICAN TROOPS OUT OF AFGHANISTAN

GREY JUANOLA

After 20 years of attempting to uproot terrorism in response to the attacks of September 11, 2001, United States President, Joseph Biden, withdrew all American troops from Afghanistan. Despite the long-anticipated end of the Afghan War, and the relieving return home of American troops, many allies of the United States and other government officials were not satisfied with the nature of the August 2021 withdrawal. Many criticized the rushed nature of the withdrawal and a shocking lack of careful consideration of the withdrawal's detrimental repercussions for Afghanistan; some go so far as to interpret it as a devastating win for terrorism. Opposedly, others believe that the withdrawal was one of necessity and that the Afghan war had been drawn out long enough. As the military presence drained the United States (US) of money and resources crucial to its economy, citizens began to question if the situation in Afghanistan was any longer America's responsibility. Did the United States really have a moral obligation to continue its occupation? Despite the U.S. departing from Afghanistan in an attempt to avoid further escalation of conflict, the U.S.'s withdrawal had instead emboldened the Taliban, greatly exacerbating its reach and creating a refugee crisis. Additionally, by withdrawing from Afghanistan, the U.S. was allowed to redirect its focus back to other priorities, but abandoned the responsibility to protect innocent civilians from the Taliban. Finally, regardless of the intention of preventing further casualties, the U.S.'s abandonment of Afghanistan would inevitably warrant more casualties for Afghan

citizens, allies, and refugees. Ultimately, the decision to remove American troops out of Afghanistan was an irresponsible one that lacked full consideration of international implications. As a result, this departure deeply tarnished the United State's credibility, shattered the precarious progress made to impose American hegemony and stabilize Afghanistan, and abandoned Afghan allies and citizens by leaving them vulnerable to the Taliban.

The United States' hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan irrevocably damaged America's credibility and global reputation, betrayed the trust of our Afghan allies, and thus has gained much criticism. Following the withdrawal of the United States, China has begun to question whether the U.S. is truly committed to defending Taiwan and cast doubt on America's willingness to defend it, in the possible event of China attempting to reunite Taiwan with the mainland. Additionally, foreign officials believe that Biden's withdrawal of U.S. troops was a massive blow to Europe's confidence in U.S. credibility. Despite warnings in July that the Taliban was advancing sooner than expected on Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, Biden had ignored requests from Britain and the European Union (EU) to extend the original withdrawal deadline. The chairman of the German Parliament's Foreign Relations Committee, Norbert Röttgen, laments Biden's early withdrawal caused a great deal of damage to both the political and moral credibility of the West, while Tom Tugendhat, the chairman of the British Parliament's Foreign Relations Committee, disdainfully deems the withdrawal to be the worst foreign

policy disaster since World War II. Due to the rushed nature of the withdrawal, U.S. allies were not properly informed of the evacuation. The decision conflicted with U.S. allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, also known as NATO, who wanted to maintain a presence in Afghanistan. The former head of the U.S. Central Command who oversaw the withdrawal, General Kenneth McKenzie, criticized the withdrawal because of the abandonment of local Afghans who helped assist American troops. McKenzie advocated for a sustained military presence and strongly believed that 2,500 American troops should have been kept on the ground indefinitely. Due to the precipitous nature of the withdrawal, many of our allies interpret the decision to pull out U.S. troops as a grave miscalculation and a lasting stain on America's global reputation. Ultimately, it substantially impacted the U.S.'s strained relationship with Afghan governments and civilians.

The departure of American forces from Afghanistan not only tarnished the U.S.'s credibility, but eroded twenty years of progress to counteract terrorism and protect women's rights, leaving Afghans to pick up the pieces of their political situations for themselves. Following the withdrawal, the Afghan government swiftly collapsed due to the 75,000 Taliban forces overpowering more than 300,000 Afghan troops in a single week. The fate of its fallen government was sealed when the Afghan president, Ashraf Ghani, fled. However, this contradicted what Biden had initially claimed on July 8, assuring that the Afghan government was unlikely to fall. Nonetheless, intelligence agencies predicted that Taliban control would surge with the withdrawal and that their seizure of cities would bring on the devastating collapse of the Afghan military and government. On August 15, 2001, the Taliban took over Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. In its aftermath, women who once had hope for their future became terrified and uncertain of their fate. As the Taliban resumed its perpetuation of a hostile environment for them, they imposed strict policies and restricted their freedom, education, and autonomy, ushering in a return of gender apartheid on Afghan women. In May 2008, there were increasing numbers of women in Kabul attending universities and the workforce in peripheral government offices and foreign Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Now, those numbers have dwindled. The Taliban administration has imposed progressively restrictive policies that have banned women completely from public places, expanding educational restrictions that have prohibited women from studying at universities, and barred women from working in international NGOs and all United Nations (UN) agencies in Afghanistan. In fear of Taliban rule, women have confined themselves to their houses or fled, afraid of facing inequalities and sexual violence, and are distrustful of promises from the Taliban claiming to ensure the preservation of

their freedom and rights. Many Afghan women who were former students had no choice but to leave their universities and give up their education because they were now forced to be accompanied by a male guardian, or else they would be subjected to threats from the Taliban. Therefore, it is without question that the decision to pull out U.S. troops had negatively impacted the welfare of the Afghan government, and the future of many Afghan women.

Due to negative impacts of the withdrawal, thousands of Afghan citizens and refugees became vulnerable to terrorism from the Taliban. Despite the Taliban and the U.S. negotiating a deal in February 2020 with the Afghan government to reduce violence, there was no power in place to ensure that the Taliban would truly abide by it. Thus, it would inevitably allow the Taliban to seize control of several provincial capitals and slaughter several innocent government officials, human rights and civil society activists, police officers, journalists, and religious scholars. As the Taliban conquered more territory in 2021, Afghan Army units, coalition forces, and innocent civilians were targeted and attacked by the Taliban, and Afghan Army commandos who had surrendered peacefully by laying down their weapons were brutally executed. Even though 120,000 Americans and coalition personnel evacuated, a total of 62,000 Afghans who helped serve as translators and assisted the American military were abandoned, according to State Department officials in December. Two years later, in 2023, 19,000 Afghan refugees who had escaped to the U.S. are still waiting for approval after applying for asylum, and are unable to leave the country to reunite with their families. The Afghan Adjustment Act, which was introduced a year prior (2022) to provide expanded visa access to Afghan refugees, was blocked by Senator Charles E. Grassley and Senator Mitch McConnell and remains stalled. Resulting from American military withdrawal in Afghanistan, citizens and refugees are faced with the daunting uncertainty of their future and the ever-present threat to their safety under Taliban authority.

However, it can be argued that despite the hastiness of the withdrawal of the U.S. military, it was a necessary evil for the U.S. and Afghanistan. Since the U.S. had already spent two decades fighting in the war in Afghanistan, a continued conflict between U.S. forces and the Taliban would only unnecessarily prolong the conflict and do more harm than good. Continuing to attempt to forcefully impose democracy on Afghanistan would only prove to create more instability for the Afghan government, its military, and innocent civilians. Although the U.S. pullout damaged America's international reputation, some believe that it is merely a temporary stain on American credibility. According to Charles A. Kupchan, an International Relations Professor at Georgetown University, President Biden's decision to end the Afghan war would actually

boost the U.S.'s international standing, and reset its strategic priorities in a fashion that would reassure our allies.

Another factor to take into consideration is the copious amount of money the U.S. had spent funding the war in Afghanistan. The U.S. had spent a staggering \$2.3 trillion on what had originally begun as a counterterrorism mission, but became a futile, costly nation-building exercise that inevitably resulted in the Taliban regaining control. The war in Afghanistan had made it the most expensive campaign to date for America since World War II; therefore, continuing to divert funds to support troops in Afghanistan would significantly weaken the American economy. Consequently, Biden's decision to pull out American troops in hindsight might have benefited the U.S. and Afghanistan in the long run. Specifically for the United States, the cut in spending allowed action to be taken on other issues of international importance. Harvard University Professor Stephen M. Wal believes the decision to end the war in Afghanistan would allot more attention and resources to bigger priorities. For example, the U.S. would be able to change its focus to redirecting U.S. military resources to allies in the Indo-Pacific region like the Philippines, Australia, India, Japan, and South Korea, and dealing with China in the event of a forceful unification of Taiwan. Additionally, it allowed Biden to address the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, and show his solidarity and commitment to protecting Ukraine. Prior to the Russian invasion in 2022, Biden warned Russian President Vladimir Putin that he would take severe economic sanctions against Russia if their forces invaded Ukraine. Biden had also called Ukrainian President Zelensky to show the U.S.'s support and commitment, along with \$60 million and small arms and ammunition to Kyviv in December. This devotion to spending on important international matters in the Indo Pacific and Eastern Europe could only be possible from the reallocation of funds away from Afghanistan.

The American withdrawal also allowed for an immediate decline in casualties within the nation, both military and civilian. In 2019, there were more than 2,400 U.S. military deaths and over 20,000 injured in Afghanistan. A total of 242,856 people died during the Afghan war, including U.S. and allied troops, military contractors, civilians, Afghan/Pakistani military and police, and opposition fighters. Out of the death toll from the Afghan war, 78,526 of them were Afghan and Pakistani soldiers, 1,144 were allied troops, 4,007 were U.S. contractors, 85,731 of them were opposition fighters, and 70,418 of them were innocent Afghan civilians. On both sides of the conflict, targeted civilian casualties were more commonplace during the war, and shockingly, the U.S.-backed security services in the former Afghan government had been reported by the United Nations mission and human rights groups with more occurrences

of torture compared to the new Afghan government. Therefore, removing American troops from Afghanistan would effectively bring an end to American military casualties in the Afghanistan conflict.

Whilst these arguments remain valid, the U.S. withdrawal had negatively resulted in the Taliban quickly regaining control of Afghanistan and contributed greatly to the refugee crisis. Leading up to August 15, 2021, several Afghan cities had fallen to the Taliban at a shocking rate. Beginning on May 1, 2021, American troops began to withdraw from Afghanistan, which only exacerbated the hold of the Taliban on numerous districts by emboldening them to cut off government bases. The Taliban also took it as an opportunity to intimidate and besiege the Afghan military and police, which caused them to begin abandoning their checkpoints and military bases. With the Taliban in control of several cities, highways, and border crossings, Afghans cannot leave the country to apply for high-priority refugee status, and are effectively trapped in their own country with nowhere to go. On August 6, 2021, Zaranj was the first provincial capital that had fallen to the Taliban, with 14 more provincial capitals taken by the Taliban a week later, capturing the southern provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, and the Herat, Kunduz, and Logar provinces, paving the way to the seizure of Kabul on August 15. With the speed that the Taliban had seized several provinces, it could only have succeeded with the opportunity to take control provided by the knowledge that the U.S. had abandoned Afghanistan.

Additionally, the U.S. has the responsibility to protect innocent civilians from the Taliban. By signing a deal with the Taliban, the U.S. became responsible for the forced abandonment of thousands of Afghans because it allowed the Taliban to regain control. In exchange for ensuring the safety of U.S. troops, ending the U.S.'s involvement in Afghanistan has dramatically jeopardized both the stability of Afghanistan and the safety of its people. On August 16, hundreds of Afghan residents frantically swarmed the tarmac at the international airport in Kabul in a panicked, desperate scramble to escape the Taliban. At least a dozen Afghans clung to the fuselage of a U.S. military plane in hopes of leaving the country, two of them plummeting off the plane to their death; days later, U.S. officials found crushed body parts inside the landing gear of the plane. In light of this disaster, European officials felt betrayed by America's decision to leave Afghanistan, because it was hypocritical to the shared U.S. and European commitment to leave no comrade behind.

Finally, the U.S.'s abandonment of Afghanistan had caused more casualties for Afghan citizens, allies, and refugees. Without U.S. backing, many Afghan citizens and allies were terrified of falling victim to Taliban reprisals, and their fear was soon justified. In the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, former soldiers, police



officers, and government officials from the Afghan government were reported to have been detained, tortured, and killed by the Taliban. The Taliban had committed 800 rights abuses from Aug. 15, 2021 to June 30, 2023 including 218 extrajudicial killings of former government officials. Those that still remain have a grim fate. Sadly, it may be too late for Afghans who have not been given eligibility to leave by the U.S. State Department, due to the Taliban's control of transportation and travel routes such as highways and border crossings.

The withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan damaged America's credibility, betrayed Afghan friends and allies, undid two decades of work in the war against terrorism, removed Afghan women's rights, left Afghan citizens and refugees vulnerable to reprisals, resulted in the Taliban regaining control and contributing to a refugee crisis. The nature of the withdrawal from Afghanistan was a callous, heartless one, with a great lack of tact and utter disregard for the gravity of the repercussions on our allies and innocent civilians. How could this be allowed to happen? How could human lives simply slip through the cracks? Now instilled with the knowledge of the consequences, one cannot help but ask these important questions. It is absolutely disheartening and terrifying to witness the pure desperation and fear as people attempted to flee their home, some at the cost of their lives. Does America feel their fear, their desperation as people chased and clung onto the U.S. plane that left Kabul? Did America forget them, the people that plummeted from the sky? While it may seem to be a brief, distant memory, it is truly a reality to others. Life goes on for the rest of the world, while life for Afghans is waiting to see family again, waiting for safety, waiting for certainty and peace. For them, life is the feeling of being trapped with nowhere to go, with the knowledge that they have been left behind.

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# SAUDI-IRANIAN DÉTENTE: BACKGROUND & IMPACT

MICHAEL CUTTER

Religion is one of the oldest forms of human expression, and though it may give rise to some of its most beautiful things, it also brings out the basest of actions. In the Middle East, a modern expression of an age-old religious schism has, over the last forty years, been the basis of a tenuous dance between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the Islamic Republic of Iran. One is the home of Islam that seeks to maintain a status quo in the region, the other a revolutionary interpretation of Islam that seeks to gain advantage over the Middle East. The one thing they have in common is their oil production capabilities, but this also exacerbates and accentuates their relations, as each country has a different strategy for this in accordance to their political goals. On the face of it, it is not dissimilar to the Cold War between the United States and Soviet Union. However, recent events have begun to change this relationship. Talks mediated by the Chinese have pushed the two states towards diplomatic neutrality and a reopening of embassies. However, these actions have not yet had even a year to settle, so it is imperative to intuit— via the internal structures, political aims, and energy policies— whether or not this is an Indian Summer of better relations, or something more permanent.

The history of their relations since the 1979 Iranian Revolution must be elaborated in some detail to make sense of this cold war. The overthrow of the Shah of Iran on a wave of economic and political discontent, with Islamists riding the crest of this wave to dominate the country, began the modern relations between

Saudi Arabia and Iran. These relations started off well, in light of the Shah's prior secularization efforts, but gradually declined in light of the religious and geopolitical differences between the two. The United States, which had previously held Shahist Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as the pillars of Middle Eastern stability, turned increasing attention to the Saudis, providing them with far more aid to help counteract the rise of Shi'ite movements. In addition, the United States helped push the Iraqi government under Saddam Hussein to war against the Iranians, as well as cut them off financially through sanctions in retaliation for taking American hostages. Given this difference in diplomatic fortunes, the Saudi government and the Iranian began to take issue with each other. During the 1980s, the two were on worse and worse terms, before an incident involving Iranian pilgrims in Mecca was used as an excuse to cut off diplomatic relations through the end of the decade. In the 1990s, a more conciliatory approach followed through the 2000s, before gradually declining. At the start of the 2010s, relations tumbled over the use of proxies in the Yemeni Civil War, and continued until diplomatic relations were severed once more by the middle of the decade. In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the chaos of the Syrian Civil War allowed a way for both sides to gain influence via proxy forces and pushed both sides to support opposing populations, with Iranians supporting Assad, and Saudis supporting Assad's opponents. This very strategic game between Yemen and Syria caused yet another deterioration of relations among the nations to the point of ceasing all diplomatic

ties by 2016. Over the next few years, mediating powers attempted to reconcile the two nations with varying efforts. Between 2016 and 2022, there were a variety of plots, assassinations, attacks, and such by both sides that were occasionally supported by foreign powers, but many times condemned internationally. However by 2023, China, acting as a mediator, managed to get the two to resume diplomatic communications, as well as inviting them to the BRICS economic group later that same year.

Given this history, it is of little surprise that such an improved relation may be seen with some skepticism as to its efficacy. Another important aspect, one that may be alien to outsiders of the region, is the religious and ideological contrasts of these relations. There are two major camps in Islam, the Shia and the Sunni. It derives from the immediate political fallout of the founding of Islam as to who would be the rightful religious leader, with the Shia, or Shiites, as the general minority of Islam, and Sunnis as the majority. Iran is a majority Shi'ite nation and claims to be the protector of the Shi'ite minorities, and having used them as proxies to gain influence in the region. The Saudi government, on the other hand, is a majority Sunni state, holding to a traditionalist interpretation of Islamic practice under the Wahabbist school, as well as holding the two most important pilgrimage sites in Islam, Mecca and Medina. Given this religious aspect, there is another level to this jostling of power. One side may declare the other heretics, deny access to the holy sites for pilgrims in retaliation, and so on. With religious support being part of the bedrock of both states, it creates further complexity and difficulties for either side to act. Yet, as much as religion is a key part of each state, they differ drastically in terms of internal structure and economy. Primarily, the differences in political structure leads to drastically differing internal goals. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of the few absolute monarchies in the world, with politics reliant on blood & tribal ties, alongside an alliance with the strongly traditionalist Wahabbist movement of Islam (which holds a strong influence on the nation). With this strong centralized control by a monarchy, the nation is able to commit to far-reaching, long term solutions without a check on its sovereign. Its foreign policy has traditionally kept in alignment with the United States, albeit with room for its own interests, in order to maintain a status quo in the region, alongside a quiet relationship with the Israeli state for maintaining security in the region, and relatively stable relations with the developed nations. In contrast, the Iranian state is semi-democratic, with Islamic judges and leaders acting to check the state's actions should it stray too far from orthodoxy, alongside other factions in government pushing for their own interests. This relative plurality of political actors in comparison to the Saudis has often forced the Iranians into shorter-term strategies as compared to the Saudis. As

well, its foreign policy has been in large part, to rely on the states on the fringe of the international scene, such as North Korea and Syria, as well as major powers with an interest in contesting world influence with the United States, such as Russia or China. This is in no small part due to the sanctions it receives from developed nations, forcing it to look further out to maintain recognition on the world stage.

In alignment to these differences, a view of the respective nations' economic spheres further illustrate the political differences on an even larger scale. Both countries are heavily reliant on oil production for their economies, but with some key differences between the two. Saudi Arabia, lacking in many resources beyond oil, has spearheaded its reserve of oil as a great resource, allowing most citizens to live well as public servants, investing in a wide swath of interests to enhance its wealth, pushing for a larger scope of its economy, and acting as a hub of Islamic finance. Its oil wealth can be seen as a physical slush fund to be pulled out of the ground and put to use. Iran's economy is reliant on oil production in a similar fashion to Saudi Arabia, but has a number of other resources to exploit, allowing for a more rounded economy that is nonetheless still heavily dependent on oil. The Iranian economy also suffers from a dearth of industrial development, which does not come from a lack of trying. The Islamic Republic, since 1979, has had quite a few leaders who have focused energies on several aspects of the Iranian economy, which have been mixed in their successes. Meanwhile, due to the Saudi state holding power within a strong monarch, there is more opportunity for a long term strategy on how to approach the region, as well as its energy situation, with its wealth providing a cushion in case certain investments go poorly. In addition, its acquiescence to strict Islamic law in accordance with the Wahabbists does lead to strict internal order at the expense of discomfort abroad towards violations of human rights that occur. In contrast, due to the different diplomatic position of the Iranians, given their internal structure and development, they have to rely on a "hand to mouth" policy, selling oil as they need in the short term, at the cost of a long term strategy. To illustrate this, is to cite recent numbers of both countries. Over the period of a year, from November 2022 to October 2023, the Saudis have curtailed the production of oil from ten and a half million barrels a day, to nine million barrels a day. Given history, it'd seem reasonable that prices of oil and related products would rise, however, the price of oil as a commodity has declined over the past year. This may be due in part to the Iranians, who covered the loss of production by the Saudis by ramping up their own, from two and a half million barrels a day, to three and a half million. This, in view of Saudi Arabia putting forward the possibility of production cuts, may lead to no small

tension between the two, as oil production cuts have been a strategic diplomatic weapon by the Saudis in the past to gain economic leverage.

In regards to geopolitical interests of the two countries, beyond oil, is that their visions and goals have produced clashes. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for instance, seeks to be a peaceable leader for Islam, and to maintain a sense of security in an often fraught geopolitical environment. Between the unstable states of Syria and Iraq to its north, alongside having to handle the Yemeni Civil War to the south, and looming above all else, its economic reliance on a commodity whose price is prone to great shifts, it is an all too understandable state for such a country to be in. Not to mention, it has issues with its main protector, the United States, as the United States produces as much, if not more, oil as Saudi Arabia does. If the United States so desired, it could outproduce the kingdom and crash the market for oil. That, for an oil producing state, is a nightmare. Its relations with Israel are often tenuous, though with general goals of status quo and stability in the region. However, with the recent Israeli-Palestinian conflict having led to deteriorating relations between Israel and the general Arab world, their relations may be in a poor state in the years to come. Iran, in contrast, is a state which seeks to be a regional power aggressively, often using proxy forces to gain influence, as has been demonstrated in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. This form of aggressive action in the region is to upset the status quo to Iran's liking, and also to allow it freedom of maneuver in a chaotic and changing situation on the ground. Hence, the Saudis and Iranians often have conflicting methods and goals for expanding their influence in the region. The Saudis prefer peace and stability to stay on top of things, while the Iranians have historically found it better for their interests to push and take advantage of chaotic situations. So for the two states to come together and talk would mean a change of strategy for one or both sides, but is likely due to changes in the Middle Eastern equation, such as the general American withdrawal from the region, the turn of the Syrian Civil War to a low-level intensity conflict, more global powers' influence entering the region such as China and Russia, or some combination of the factors above. Another important set of factors are the ramifications of American withdrawal from Afghanistan prompting a greater search for security among countries— as it led American allies in the Middle East to question their own protection after the disastrous collapse of Afghanistan's American backed government. Hence, this reorganization of their relationship may have proven necessary with the turnover of the 2010s to the 2020s, and was perhaps accelerated due to the extraordinary events of the past few years.

Now, as the Middle East continues to escalate further with the Houthis disrupting the flow of trade via the Red Sea & Suez Canal, alongside the Israeli push to expand the Gaza conflict into a regional

conflict, both Iran and Saudi Arabia have even bigger choices to make to maintain this relative detente. They both have substantial stakes in these crises, which could lead to a greater conflagration in the region than has been seen in decades. The Saudis do not like the prospect of fighting in their backyard, nor do the Iranians want to be dragged into a regional war over Yemen or Gaza. Engaging with either will require the most delicate diplomacy, given the religious and political aspects of these conflicts.

Now, it is imperative to discuss the energy policies, religious dimensions, the dismal science of economics, and the politics of both sides in regards to this detente. With the comprehensive background view of Saudi and Iranian politics explains, a new questions guides discussion of the two Middle Eastern nations: how long can a detente foreign policy last, and how did it come to be? The likelihood that this policy can be sustained by the two nations long term is dismal, perhaps lasting a decade or two at the most, due to major differences between the two nation states. Their goals and policies will likely come into conflict at some point in the near future, but as of right now, the Iranians and Saudis are working together in order to figure out what the Middle East will look like for the two of them. As for the latter question, the 'how', the explanation is fairly simple. Recent events have shown that the Chinese brokered the arrangement between the two states, which may lead to such a possibility in the future, as the invitation to the BRICS economic group may also be. Yet such an arrangement could not have happened without a change of mindset on the part of both sides. For forty years, the two have been in conflict, allowing for exploitation by powers seeking to gain influence. With the cooldown of conflicts within the region, co-operation may seem more reasonable and more profitable than trying to compete for influence over war-torn countries. The simplest way to explain this alliance of two, previously hostile states, may be a form of shoring up support into a particularly strange time as long standing diplomatic ties and alliances begin shifting. The brokering of Chinese diplomats may have been the way for all parties to save face and pursue such a line of policy, but it may be a necessary one. With the last few years weakening the post Cold War actions of the United States in the Middle East which had positioned itself as the main power in the region, it leaves room for other states to maneuver and gain greater influence.

With the evidence to support such a viewpoint, it is entirely likely, and feasible, that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran detente between the two could lead to better relations and a more peaceful Middle East. Despite the differences of politics and economics, it may be more beneficial to them to cooperate than continue their rivalry. Particularly as American influence in the region is on the decline, it would be

a rare opportunity for the two countries to reorient the region towards a more peaceful coexistence. This is not impossible, but would require a substantial amount of work on the part of both to cooperate and find a better solution to their problems than proxy conflicts. Such a solution would allow for the Middle East to have breathing space, and find firmer footing for the twenty first century moving forward.

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# THE US AND ITS POSITION IN THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

NOEL PRUDENTE

The Philippines has long held close ties with the United States who has been a notably reliable ally to the nation for over a century. However, does the Philippines have the ability to return the aid and benefits that the United States has to offer? The Philippines is a crucial ally to the west especially in the modern era of warfare, as well as an important asset to economic partnership. The advantages of this political and economic alliance between the United States and the Philippines must be considered against the disadvantages, but ultimately, the unique position of the Philippines allows for this allegiance to outweigh disadvantages and provide benefits to both partners and not an inequitable reliance on the United States by the Philippines.

The Philippines and the United States have had political ties throughout modern history that shifted significantly in 1946 when the former U.S. territory gained independence following the end of World War II. This change in relations culminated with the Military Base Agreement of 1947. This ninety-nine year long lease pledged twenty-two bases for mutual benefit between the United States and the Philippines. The Military Base Agreement Act ensured that the occupied military installations would be used for the defense of both the United States and the Philippines. Today, the act is under the new guise of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). The EDCA is a key pillar of the U.S. and Philippines alliance with support of combined training, exercises, and interoperability of forces. Expansion of the EDCA is argued to make the alliance even stronger and more resilient, and

accelerate modernization of combined military capabilities. This expansion is currently under works as of February 2023 when the Philippines and the United States agreed upon the establishment of nine new locations between the two nations. This agreement, and its formal expansion, is strategically very significant to the United States ability to carry out foreign policy initiatives. Current U.S. president, Joseph Biden, speaks of this goal in his foreign policy address in which he calls for “American leadership” against the increasing advances of authoritarian rule that the administration has noted in the ambition of China and the “determination of Russia to damage and disrupt [American] democracy.” The Philippines is in an optimal location for the United States to aid Taiwan if need be against any further Chinese aggression. Having multiple bases in different regions of the Philippines gives the United States strategic positioning in the Southeast Asian region and allows for ample time for the United States to react and respond to dangers within the region. The EDCA ensures the opportunity to negotiate active bases in the Philippines as to the benefit of both nations. The United States has committed more than eighty million dollars worth of infrastructure at the five existing sites: the Antonio Bautista Air Base in Palawan, Basa Air Base in Pampanga, Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija, the Benito Ebuen Air Base in Cebu, and the Lumbia Air Base in Mindanao. With four additional bases not named, it is safe to say that the Philippines is looking to establish a network in the region of quick responders to actions they deem as an attack against democracy.

Beyond the exteriors of military force, the Philippines is also a crucial trade partner to the United States. The United States is the top trading partner of the Philippines, as of 2022, but the U.S. is also responsible for over fifteen percent of the Philippines' total exports. The Philippines and the United States have trade agreements dating back to 1989 with the Bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) which established annual meetings between the two nations to discuss economic administrations and trade facilitation (2010), cooperation against illegal transshipments (2006), and implementation of minimum access commitments of the Philippines (1998). The Philippines have also increased trade relations with the U.S. significantly in the last twenty six years, with exports from the Philippines to the United States increasing at a rate of 2.41% annually, from \$7.17B in 1995 to \$13.3B in 2021. The Philippines continues to stimulate trade with the United States at increasing rates over recent years. In terms of agricultural exports, the Philippines is considered the eighth largest market for the United States, purchasing up to 3.5 billion in imports annually. Circa 2010, economic integration of the two countries declined as partnerships like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other regional trade agreements flourished in the nation. Despite this period of declined partnership, (exports slipped from thirty to fifteen percent and imports from eighteen to eleven percent) the absolute terms of trade were still increasing over the same period.

According to the United States, the Philippines is regarded as a major non-NATO ally which grants the island nation with many benefits including:

“Eligibility of loans of material, supplies, or equipment for cooperative research, development, testing, or evaluation purposes; cooperative funding of training on a bilateral or multilateral basis, if the financial arrangements are reciprocal; priority delivery of Excess Defense articles transferred under section 516 of the Foreign Assistance Act; access to depleted uranium ammunition; eligibility to enter into an MOU or other formal agreement with the U.S. department of defense for the purpose of conducting cooperative research and development projects on defense equipment and munitions; and grants funding to procure explosives detection devices and other counter-terrorism research and development projects under the auspices of the Department of State's Technical Support Working.”

These opportunities granted to the Philippines as an objective trading partner outside of NATO are very valuable to both nations. For the Philippines, having access to request loans from the United States is a major opportunity for economic development, but it is also beneficial for the United States to give these economic

investments because as the country's top foreign investor, they seek to gain from economic development of the nation.

Many question the efficacy of this investment on the part of the United States, arguing that it may not be worth the spending. While, as noted prior, the Philippines is arguably one of the greatest hubs in the Indo-Pacific regions for many U.S. military initiatives and locations of interest, the cost of establishing a foothold there is not ignorable. Renovating military installations is not a small feat, and of course building new ones is an even larger investment. The United States, through the EDCA, has allotted approximately eighty-two million dollars into military installations in 2019. By the end of the 2023 fiscal year, this number jumped to one hundred million dollars. This appropriation doesn't even allot for spending on military training, armament, or other military expenses not included in the EDCA. The Philippines does not have a high budget allotted to military spending and uses the United States as a catch-all economic defense against formidable adversaries. Why should the United States carry the burden of protecting a nation that doesn't invest in their own national security? Realistically, this spending is insignificant to the United States' national defense budget of \$816.7 billion. So, the small percentage of spending towards the Philippines contains more to gain than lose in the perspective of the United States. The long lasting foothold in Southeast Asia is an investment worth spending for the U.S. and as military assistance continues to be provided for the Philippines, it is hoped that neighboring Southeast Asian follow suit and allow western economic influence to prosper throughout the region. This gives the U.S. even more reason to maintain establishment within the Philippine nation. It is also, again, imperative to recognize the geographic influence that the Philippines have in the perspective of the United States military. The bases the U.S. possess are strategically positioned— with two in northern Luzon, towards the South China Sea, one in the city of Palawan, and the last of which in the southern island of Mindanao in Cagayan de Oro. These are positioned to fully encircle the Philippines, building a somewhat pseudo perimeter around the nation. Not only does it create a perimeter, it lets the United States respond outwardly towards any points of interest that may be of concern, for example the increasing tensions with Taiwan and China. Solely for this fact, it is desirable for the United States to remain a significant ally of this Southeast Asian nation.

The United States would disadvantage itself to end its economic and militaristic relationship with the Philippines. The trade between these nations helps stimulate government meetings for future military bases and establishes the United States in Southeast Asia. What the United States covets most is the strategic location of the Philippines. The United States does not necessarily require

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economic connections to the Philippines. The United States also doesn't require the aid of the Philippines in terms of sheer military power. However, what the Philippines has to offer the United States is worth more than both of those subjects combined. The Philippines offer the United States an opportunity to maintain influence across the Pacific. It shows strength, financial expertise, and military might against our adversaries in that hemisphere of the world. The Philippines also offers a generous amount of territory for the United States to obtain without forceful or aggressive obstruction of an unwilling nation, because of the mutual benefit. Ultimately, the Philippines offers the U.S. a strategic location to demonstrate United States military might and is a hub for commerce, trade, and military demonstrations in Asia. The Philippines provides the United States a podium and an audience to their adversaries. While the U.S. provides the means to support the majority of the economic and military operations of the Philippines, the investment is nothing short of advantageous to the United States as well and remains beneficial to both nations.

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# FEAR OF CONTROVERSIAL CONTENT: THE HIDDEN KILLER OF BOOKS AND CLASSES

IZZY DABACO

Education has always been a balancing act for those in power. It leads to writing, and as so commonly expressed, the pen is often more dangerous than the sword. Having an effect on the thoughts of a population is a power too strong for just anyone to wield. Thus, the censorship of both education and books is a point of contention as old as time, the monarchy, as old as revolutions and the concept of individuality. When people write, they exercise freedom and critical thought, a dangerous weapon to those who want to keep their people under oppressive ideologies. As of late, book bannings seem to plague media headlines, but this concept is a stain on society, unable to be cleansed by time. The censorship of knowledge throughout a society has been weaponized again and again by those in power, in order to keep people uneducated and compliant. When this issue is examined globally, this manipulation tactic is being pushed both by the ignorant public and politicians, but at the end of the day, it can be asserted that the public are tools of the government and political ideology. It is the political parties that institutes authoritarian rule and policies. Book banning and censorship of educational content has its claws in several countries: it is an universal desire to control the flow of information.

In several cases, such as Hong Kong (China), it is a known fact that the government fully believes that educational content must be structured in adherence to political ideology. This is also known as political propaganda: a rewriting of history, the purposeful removal of bias, intentionally trying to get the population to

think in a way that is supporting whomever is in charge. There are several cases of this in history and both in modern times. Current events at the time of writing this article come to mind, with the BBC deliberately wording certain article titles in such a way that they won't spark outrage, and at the same time, softening the harsh reality that one would expect a news report to be blunt, honest and unbiased about. There is a need for a separation between the educational world and what political ideals one adheres to: education should be focused on presenting the unbiased truth rather than the politics of that time, unless all sides are being presented with equal weight and a clear lack of bias. The censorship of books and content taught in global educational structures is only going to hinder students if restricted. It won't protect them from theoretical radical and dangerous ideas: in fact, it may just create a generation that is more likely to fall into having only biased information available. This fear of controversial content is unfounded and it leads to the questioning of whether or not such content is truly controversial. Does it simply dare to ask questions that endanger black or white ideology, providing alternative ways of looking at things that wouldn't necessarily be promoted by a controlling majority?

The continued course of action to ban books and create educational courses with limited and biased information are not only intertwined in concept but are just as dangerous as the other. Both actions will only lower education standards as a whole. Active censorship is the main cause of death in higher academic



standards and critical thought; it restricts the introduction of new ideas and information that necessitates critical thinking. This article argues *against* censorship in both education and in literature due to perceived controversies, and instead favors the elimination of restrictions placed on schools, whether it is in the form of manipulating courses or censoring certain texts. As previously stated, banning books and educational censorship is an all too common trend found in the rest of the world. Cases found in Hong Kong, England, and Canada will be presented as examples of international censorship. Furthermore, this article will examine the opposing argument; why some content is not suitable for a learning environment and should be banned, or at the very least, reformed or censored in some way. A case from Finland will counter this point as proof of being one of the most successful educational systems in the world, while still maintaining a complete lack of censorship in its courses. There can be countless cases found across the globe of educational systems impacted by censorship, and this is nothing more but a different kind of struggle for power. It's a dangerous attempt made by political ideologues to maintain control of public thought and of education itself, through the diction as to what kind of information is allowed to be taught in public school systems.

China is notorious for its censorship. The country has been revealed to have one of the world's most restrictive media environments, with censorship running rampant. Many U.S. sites are blocked, and it is common knowledge that journalists get thrown in prison for their investigative reporting. While this is not necessarily censorship in the form of education, this background is important to make note of because what student doesn't use

the internet for help on assignments or even to engage with news reports? These days, an educated student needs internet access, and to strip that away with the excuse of media censorship being "a means to an end" is to intellectually cripple that student. This government action is actively taking away resources the modern day student depends on for their education. Furthermore it sets a precedent for the censorship occurring in Hong Kong. Students have resorted to becoming activists in Hong Kong and they actively take to the streets to protest the actions of the Chinese government. This has been a constant with the people of Hong Kong: since the unification with China in 1997, there has always been a clash of Hong Kong patriotism vs. Chinese nationalism. This has only increased with the educational policies China has set for Hong Kong. The education system has become a tool for the government to advance their political agenda, to promote Chinese nationalism, as the education reform was used as a response method to Hong Kong protests. The "One Country, Two Systems" education policy directly involves itself in censorship within the educational system, as the school systems went through meticulous measures to approve or disapprove textbooks and curriculum: anything with a hint of pro-independence or Hong Kong patriotism was thrown out. This supports the idea that authoritarian governments are an inherent threat to freedom of speech and press within the educational school system. The system that the Chinese government implemented has quite literally threatened teachers into submission: they have been scared into silence about topics that have been particularly affected by censorship, including implementing Chinese nationalistic ideologies and revisionist history. Polluting the educational system with political influence is doing an incredible disservice to both the educational system and students: they need to hear not only the objective truth but alternative ideas, rather than just what the government approves on. Teachers should be able to exercise academic freedom in sharing educational content and not get fired for things like allowing students to perform "Glory to Hong Kong" and using "inappropriate teaching materials" – AKA, anything pro-independence. These teachers are being labeled as professional failures, all for going against the grain. At this rate, with these types of restrictions, Hong Kong is suffering under extreme forms of educational fascism: the government is actively destroying any way to get access to content that might dare actually try educating someone; instead, students are being force fed propaganda. Hong Kong schools are being directly controlled by Chinese nationalist policy makers who wish to adhere to political ideologies and censor the information taught to students. The Chinese government sees the teaching profession only as a way to disseminate nationalistic propaganda: they are more than willing to compromise intellectual

freedom to keep control on Hong Kong and its future. It's more than a struggle of educational content: it's a power struggle with the end goal essentially being to guide youth towards ignorance in fear that once the twig is bent, the tree is inclined. Those in charge are aware of the power that education holds, but it isn't their right to try and censor it or twist it to uphold their way of life or beliefs. If one is surrounded by only what they know, they can never grow to their full potential.

Censorship also exists in democracies such as Canada. Similar to both China and the U.S., libraries and schools alike have been receiving complaints about books. One example of this occurred in 2019, in which a parent requested for a book's removal because of a same sex relationship portrayed within the book. However, as it was leaked to the press, outrage ensued, and the book was returned to the library. This is just one example of books being censored in schools. In 1997, a teacher submitted three books to the board of education to get approval to teach them in class. The request was denied, and the case ended up making its way to the Supreme Court of Canada, in which it was ruled that the board could not ban books on the premise of the content within (specifically, once again, LGBTQ+ identities). This ruling proves that it is the role of the teacher and the student to understand that the content within books and classes is objective and that it is their job to think critically about them. Thus, banning on this premise decreases the chance and opportunity for students to think critically, which is one of the most important skills a student could learn while enrolled in school. Both events resulted in a win against censorship in both schools and in regards to book bans. However, this win did not come without backlash: parents and groups made it their mission to challenge the allowance of these "offending resources". One of these groups, "Culture Guard", is an ultraconservative political group that is interested in bashing concepts of LGBTQ and pride, proudly engaging in a "culture war". The site itself claims that the group is against censorship yet the group is clearly against any mention of queerness in schools. Culture Guard's main rationale for activism is wanting to protect children from a "political propaganda", indeed children's books with LGBTQ+ representation. This circular argument is evident in itself through wanting to ban content in schools. The assumptions, which are that students are not prepared to interact with controversial content, as the threat of seeing or reading something inappropriate or politically motivated, that government officials and concerned activist groups make is quite ironic considering the rise of the internet. Students are already interacting with controversial content, and a majority are doing so with a critical mind! It's ironic that one of the reasons why content and books are being banned is to protect children and their emotional states (An article and

a GoFundMe page from the group claims that the introduction of LGBTQ content is going to negatively affect children) from the "radical left", when it is so easily obvious through just skimming through the Culture Guard website how incredibly homophobic they are (and it is common knowledge that parents who aren't accepting of their children have much more of a negative impact than a book could have). While this group is extremely radical, there should be an attempt made to appeal to them: wouldn't it be safer to discuss these topics and feelings at school with friends and teachers than for them to be alone, staring at a screen, completely isolated, and engaging in such content? This kind of reasoning doesn't have to apply to just queer content: any kind of content can fit into here as well. To blindly eliminate any sort of controversial content that contradicts one's beliefs may end up in the student engaging with it in a perhaps unhealthy way rather than to learn about them in a classroom setting, and learning about the content from a teacher who has education and preparation for presenting a concept without bias. To ban content on the basis that students are not prepared for controversial content only serves to shelter said students and do the opposite of what the school system is designed to do: prepare students for both real life and higher education (where they most certainly will have access to this type of content). Schools are not promoting the values of content, they are simply introducing and explaining the reasons behind it. Clearly, Canadian parental groups don't see it this way: they see the introduction of LGBTQ+ topics and critical race theory as activism, not academics. This is eerily similar to the situation in Hong Kong, and it all boils down to the same idea: a political party is concerned with their struggle for power, and any introduction of an opposing idea is seen with distrust and anger. The concept of middle ground perspectives is seemingly impossible to grasp, and immediately these political machines jump to censorship being the only option instead of engaging in important and active conversations. The content of books and course material is already submitted beforehand to a Board of Education so there is no reason for parents to protest pre-approved content. Once again, most of the content that is seen as controversial, such as information about queerness or Critical Race Theory, is already widely available on the internet and it is very likely that students have already been familiarized with these concepts. Books and classes shouldn't be banned on the premise that they "may" influence students, as that premise is shaky at best and is just a tactic to keep content in schools to lean to the demands of the political majority, not unlike what the schools in Hong Kong are going through. Once again, the rationale of censorship being "out of necessity" and "a means to an end" so that a political side can wrestle back control, is repeated throughout society as a whole. Students have the right

to read books that either interest them or that are approved by their schools and to attend classes, regardless if the content doesn't fit the perfect ideological model of whatever political party is the majority at the time.

Despite the earlier claims of Canada's issues with censorship, it should be noted that on a grander scale, it isn't as controlling as other countries. In fact, there has been a study on Canadian international schools dealing with other countries' finding problems with their curriculum. These Canadian international schools offer Canadian curriculum to eight countries, spanning the continents of Asia, Europe, and South America, and their goal is to provide students with not only opportunities to continue their education in Canada, but lifelong skills such as global understanding and intercultural knowledge. The study focuses on the responses of principals and their experiences with censorship. These teachers reported being extremely distressed about governments telling them that they had to change their curriculum, many of them expressing feelings of wanting to quit and switch professions. It's understandable why teachers want to leave. How can they truly feel successful in educating when they could easily face repercussions in doing so? This echoes the same fear that teachers in Hong Kong have expressed. At the very least, the article does describe these teachers engaging in thoughtful conversations about censorship and freedoms of speech. This is the goal of the educational system: to get students to make connections with content and experiences in their own lives. It also should be noted that these teachers were absolutely risking their jobs talking to these students, as did teachers in Hong Kong. Clearly, there is a discrepancy between countries when it comes to education curriculum, and this article presents no exceptions. It acknowledges the differences in beliefs and brings up concepts like moral imperialism. Nevertheless, schools should be allowed to teach their students and it is clear that these teachers would do so without bias, without pressure to convince their students to conform to Western ideals. Most importantly, the fact that they couldn't is the biggest red flag. This concept of fighting to educate the youth is echoed in libraries across the world. All librarians, including teacher librarians, challenge all requests for censorship, and should continue doing so, even if it creates a battle. When one librarian, one teacher, one student stands up to issues of censorship and fights back against these demands, it creates a precedent that is hopefully repeated again and again.

John Self, from the BBC, lists several examples of widespread censorship exacted by governments and other instruments of political power. To a person who is even slightly aware of the political climates in countries like Russia and China, the idea of educational censorship occurring there isn't too surprising.

However, Britain, one of the leading democratic nations in the world, has been facing censorship for an extremely long time. The argument is to protect the public from being exposed to ideas that are deemed crass, abnormal, or even corruptive to the general public. These are ideas and "concerns" that are directly reflected in the arguments for book banning in the United States. Clearly, as long as there is a strong government concerned with keeping power, books will be banned or threatened with censorship, no matter how democratic they claim to be. Examples of authors who had their works banned in Britain include James Joyce and DH Lawrence – in fact, Penguin books, a well known publishing house, was sued by the British government for the publication of "Lady Chatterley's Lover", for it was claimed to be in violation of the Obscene Publications Act of 1959. This court case is actually revolutionary, for Penguin House rightfully so was found not guilty. The impact of this case is clear: if Penguin House got away with publishing *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, no book of literary merit could be prosecuted under claim of obscenity. While this is a story of success from censorship, modern censorship in Britain still exists today– the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals found that a third of librarians were asked to remove books due to themes related to the LGBTQ+ community, the history of British colonization, and race. Clearly, the culture wars and fears of radicalization through books and other educational content cross international boundaries. It is both reassuring and frustrating that, while the United States is not alone in this fight against censorship, the idea that this trend of book banning is all across the globe speaks to the irrational fear certain people have of new ideas and concepts. As previously mentioned, censorship in any form only encourages a closed minded population: it is important to explore all types of content, especially in an educational setting, and the idea that the government or radical groups want to try and control that is not only absurd but a clear attempt to control and manipulate the people.

The arguments that support book banning and encourage censorship within educational censorship are morally flimsy at best and transparently, politically motivated, at worse. There should be no reason the government has to get involved with the banning of books through educational gag orders. There should be no reason for libraries to have to hide books on shelves because sharing them with students or even teaching about controversial content could get them fired. The overwhelming evidence points to attempts to get books banned because content does not fit into the mold of what is deemed acceptable by the political majority: usually because they mention queer or people of color's perspectives. The violently loud minority is trying to silence the voices of the oppressed, simply because those voices don't fit into their

ideological beliefs. They are putting their standards over the need for diversity in content in educational systems around the world. To try to ban books on claims that they are vastly inappropriate and to spread misinformation on these books not only harms the educational system, it harms society as a whole. The fight to ban books is a pattern that has occurred again and again in history, and the right answer will always be to protect knowledge and to protect students' rights to accessing that knowledge.

A stark contrast to the situations regarding censorship and education can be seen in a study done in Finland, where American teachers went to visit and observe the differences in education. Their findings can easily be applied globally to the previously mentioned cases, especially Hong Kong and Canada. First, one of the key factors that these teachers observed was that Finnish students had autonomy. These students were told they could, essentially, learn what they wanted, and enjoyed what they were learning. The Finnish education system was noted to put emphasis on inquiry based learning, rather than standardized testing. Teachers as well were willing to answer questions and if they didn't know, exploring the concept with the students. This is in stark contrast to the education in Canada and Hong Kong. There are no governments telling teachers what they can or can't teach, there are no standardized tests requirements, and there are no mobilized political groups to demand books be banned. The system is designed to have individualized open learning for each student, and that is what is successful. The Finnish education system seems to fully understand the idea of allowing students to explore inquiries, to make their own judgments with the content presented to them, and the content will have multiple perspectives. The education system proudly supports the idea that students are autonomous and have freedoms, and a school based on those concepts not only will succeed but is fulfilling the moral requirements of what exactly a school should be. It should be a place of learning, where students and teachers can explore ideas together, not a place of censorship.

The controversy surrounding book banning and content cutting of AP classes sounds ridiculous when one thinks about it: why on earth should a book be banned? Clearly, the people who want books banned have a hidden agenda. They don't want what they consider to be "leftist perspectives", taught in schools when it's quite literally a conversation about how a person's brain functions. This kind of a perspective of an "us vs. them" will always prevail when there is class or group discrimination, no matter which country or content. Political ideologies and government propaganda will always be at war with the "Other", anything or anyone that seeks an unbiased record or is against these two factions: someone who wants to think for themselves and engage all

forms of content, whether it be through reading books or getting an education. Nevertheless, political parties will always be wary of the other side influencing the educational system with its ideologies and poisoning the youth with its propaganda. There will forever be a divide between these two groups of people, because one sees the other as "vile" and "inappropriate". To try and defend the banning of books or the censorship of content with these arguments is simply absurd. It's simply absurd that in 2023, there's been a huge influx of educational gag orders—legislative efforts to restrict teaching about topics that are seen as controversial, such as race, gender, history and queerness, as well over a thousand documented cases of demands to pull books from libraries across the globe. Content should not be censored in the classroom. Students have the right to an education: they have the right to enjoy an open library. To censor knowledge is an attempt to control the masses. The need for education to be stronger than ever and governments are crippling it with book censorship and censorship of content. Teachers and librarians should be trusted to help students navigate controversial or otherwise risqué content. For parents to try and determine what they believe is the content their child should be learning despite having no experience in the field is absolutely absurd. It's a conversation that's going to keep having to happen as long as there are political ideologies, as long as there are people passionate enough to follow those ideologies despite what common sense tells them. The fact that there are so many resources documenting both bills that are educational gags as well as lists of banned books (and how to access these books) is comforting. This pattern and fight against the vocal and angry minority is inevitable: we just have to make sure to be constantly aware of it and educate ourselves on their tactics, as well as for the reasons why they would want books banned, why they would want these classes banned, why this content shouldn't be allowed in classrooms. As long as we are aware, it's a winnable fight, despite how vocal and violent the minority may get.

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